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## A last farewell

This morning President Hosni Mubarak arrives in Paris to pay his last respects to François Mitterrand, France's longest serving president, who died on Monday, aged 79. President Mubarak will be joined by up to 20 heads of state and numerous dignitaries, including UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali and American Vice President Al Gore, at a solemn mass in the cathedral of Notre Dame which will take place simultaneously with Mitterrand's funeral in Jarnac, writes Sherif El-Shubashy.

During the final years of his 14 year presidency Mitterrand was a regular visitor to Egypt, and tried to spend at least a couple of weeks in Aswan each winter. He came in search of peace and the sun, he said during his last visit to the country three weeks before his death, when he stayed, as always, at the Old Cataract Hotel.

Mitterrand left Egypt for the last time on 29 December. On 5 January he wrote to President Mubarak, via the Egyptian ambassador to France, expressing his appreciation for the hospitality extended to him in Egypt, and his admiration of the beauty of the country. The letter was perhaps the last to bear the signature of François Mitterrand.



Taking leave: François Mitterrand departs the Old Cataract Hotel in Aswan for the last time on 29 December, before being driven to the airport on his way back to Paris (photos: Amr Nabil)

### Ganzouri

#### meets Seguin

PRIME Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri yesterday received Philippe Seguin, president of the French National Assembly, who arrived in Cairo from Syria on the last stop of a Middle East tour. The two leaders discussed bilateral relations and the Middle East peace process. The head of the foreign relations committee at the People's Assembly and the French ambassador, to Cairo attended the meeting.

#### Prisoner release

A WEEK ahead of the Palestinian elections, Israel yesterday released hundreds of Palestinian prisoners as part of its peace agreement with the PLO. Among the 850 released were members of the Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups, as well as other Palestinians convicted of killing Arabs collaborating with Israel.

While the number of prisoners to be released over the next few days is expected to reach 1,200, some 25 female prisoners refused to leave jail in protest against Israel's insistence on not freeing six other female inmates convicted of killing Israelis.

#### New unrest

A BAHRAIN government source has stated that security forces used "legal" methods to disperse a gathering of a few hundred demonstrators in Al-Deech, outside the capital Manama, on Tuesday.

A statement by the opposition group the Bahrain Freedom Movement, claimed that hundreds of protesters in Al-Deech, Jadhafis, and Sanabes took to the streets to protest the government's persistent policy of closing down mosques and clamping down on prominent Shi'ite opposition clerics and their followers.

### INSIDE



#### A monastery and a miracle p.14

- Selama A. Selama: Living with Mossad.....p.9
- Mohamed El-Ahmed: The morphology of pan-Arabism.....p.8
- Engel Ahmed: An ambiguous harvest of terror.....p.9
- David Du Boies: Time for change.....p.8
- James Zogby: Anti-terrorism bill revisited.....p.7
- Herman Ouseley: Policing Britain's blacks.....p.6
- Mohamed El-Sayed Selama: Oceanic opportunities.....p.9
- Sahyoun Kheir: Enlightenment or fraud?.....p.9
- Samuel Mikumak: Up against heavy odds.....p.7

# Time pressure for peace

As Warren Christopher began a new round of shuttle diplomacy in the region, Jordan's King Hussein made his first public appearance in Tel Aviv

US Secretary of State Warren Christopher arrived in Jerusalem yesterday at the outset of a new round of shuttle diplomacy, and pledged to intensify efforts to achieve a Syrian-Israeli peace agreement ahead of US and Israeli elections later this year. On leaving Washington, Christopher said that the talks had now reached a crucial stage where both sides could see the need for a necessary force settlement — an apparent allusion to a possible land-for-peace arrangement involving withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

"We've come to a critical point in the negotiations, where we need to coalesce on some of the main issues", he said. "We need to bring them together and to move forward at an intensified pace."

As Christopher met with Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, Jordan's King Hussein flew his private helicopter to Tel Aviv for a one-day visit intended to cement the new friendship between the two countries.

Israeli radio stations played Arabic songs in honour of the king's visit. "Welcome, your majesty, King Hussein", read a banner headline in Arabic in the Israeli Hebrew-language daily newspaper *Yedioth Ahronot*.

Hussein's visit seemed to be timed to send a message to Syria about the kind of peace Israel is demanding after years of being stymied by the Arab world as an illegitimate creation of the West, according to The Associated Press.

Hussein told *Yedioth Ahronot*: "I'm certainly aware of my popularity [in Israel] and it touches my heart." Hussein and Peres were meeting with Christopher to "exchange views on peace and on the possibilities of expanding it", the king said.

Meanwhile, Christopher acknowledged that "there are very serious gaps" remaining between Syria and Israel, but said he had arrived in Israel "in a hopeful frame of mind".

His 16th negotiating trip to the Middle East got off to a bumpy start. First, his departure from Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, was delayed for three and a half hours because of blizzard conditions. And on the way across the Atlantic, the automatic pilot failed, causing the plane to list from side to side.

Following the meeting with Peres, Christopher was asked if the Israeli general elections in October and US presidential elections in November would have an impact on the negotiations. They did, he replied, impose a time-scale on the peace process: "1996 has its electoral timetable which inevitably requires intensification, an acceleration of the process. We are going to intensify our efforts to ensure that Israel achieves peace with security."

For his part, Peres said Israel and Syria would need to accelerate the pace of negotiations if they wanted to seal an accord before the Israeli elections. "We have only a few months at our disposal... and without a very intensive effort,

I doubt if we'll be able to succeed," he said.

But he described the two rounds of talks held near Washington recently as "a highly successful encounter" which had "initiated a new spirit between the two sides".

Christopher will meet with Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad in Damascus on Friday, hoping for a response to Israeli proposals made in talks which recessed a week earlier.

The trip is expected to result in dates for more talks between Israeli and Syrian officials in the United States, possibly around 22 January.

"All the issues are on the table and it is possible for the parties now to see the tradeoffs", Christopher said. The negotiations are concentrating on territory, peace terms and border security measures in the case of Israel returning the strategic Golan Heights, captured in the 1967 War.

The Syrian government yesterday signalled its readiness to engage in "continuous negotiations" with Israel until the two sides reached a peace agreement. The official newspaper *Al-Baath* said that "great hopes" were attached to Christopher's current trip.

According to the newspaper, "if there is anything new in the Syrian position, it is a readiness to engage in continuous negotiations, negotiations that will bring the results necessary both for peace and regional security."

Next weekend, Christopher will meet with PLO chairman

Yasser Arafat, focusing on the 20 January elections of a legislature for the self-rule areas in the West Bank and Gaza.

Arafat has blamed Peres for the recent assassination of Islamist militant Yehiya Ayyash, who is believed to have masterminded suicide attacks against Israel. In a departure from his recent refusal to praise terrorists, Arafat also lauded Ayyash. The killing and its aftermath could be a source of friction. "I'm going to be reminding [Arafat]," said Christopher, "as I've done every time I've been with him, about his commitment to bring an end to terrorism."

PLO officials have criticised Hussein's visit to Israel, saying that he should first have visited lands under Palestinian rule.

Authorities clamped unprecedented security arrangements on Tel Aviv, deploying some 6,000 policemen, special forces, Shin Bet agents and snipers to protect the king.

Hussein was welcomed with full military honours at Tel Aviv airport by Peres, before inaugurating a new trauma unit dedicated to Yitzhak Rabin at the Ichilov Hospital, where the prime minister died on 4 November after he was shot by a Jewish radical.

The king was travelling afterwards to the shores of the Sea of Galilee in northern Israel to take part, with Peres and Christopher, in a ceremony honouring "those who have contributed to the cause of peace".

## Steering towards growth

Ministers and cabinet portfolios were reshuffled last week as the government steered towards a full-fledged economic recovery. The Foreign Trade Department was moved from the Ministry of Economy to the Ministry of Supply and Home Trade, the Ministry of International Cooperation went to the minister of economy, and the man who spent over 10 years marketing Egypt as an investment destination was put in charge of tax collection.

The economy bore the full weight of last week's cabinet changes, geared to accommodate the needs of the second phase of economic reform.

The appointment of Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri helped make the change a smooth one. El-Ganzouri is known to be the architect of the economic and social plan that has taken Egypt from a centrally planned to a market economy over the past five years. He has been at the heart of the decision-making process for the 13 years he has spent as a cabinet minister.

As outlined in President Mubarak's meeting with the cabinet's economic group last Sunday, the pressing tasks before the new cabinet are to speed up the second phase of economic reforms, which aim at generating employment, increasing the productivity of labour and capital and improving the quality of life for the average Egyptian.

In this context, the long-awaited investment law promises finally to materialise after years of being passed from one parliament to the next. The main purposes of this law are to unify existing investment laws, which occasionally overlap; to cut red tape involved in establishing projects; and to offer tax incentives to industrial projects. Also on the cabinet's agenda is a system of tax rebates for exporters, and proposals to cut bank interest rates.

Private investors, who point out that the government has been promising to enact many of these measures for over a decade, found consolation in the appointment of Mohamed El-Gharib, as the new minister of finance. El-Gharib was for 10 years the executive president of the General Authority for Investment (GAFI), the government body which awards permission for the establishment of new projects. Touring the world and giving dozens of speeches to lure both foreign and Egyptian investors, El-Gharib emerged as a symbol of the government's seriousness in attracting investment.

Businessmen say they hope El-Gharib's appointment is a sign that the government is preparing to reverse the tight fiscal policies it has followed since the inception of the economic reform programme. Last week, El-Gharib said he plans to orient ministry policies towards promoting growth and encouraging investment.

Nawal El-Tatawi, minister of economy and international cooperation, brings to the integrated portfolio a mixed, but relevant, experience as a banker. Formerly the chairwoman of the Arab Investment Bank, El-Tatawi is now responsible for gearing up the banking sector, the stock market and the foreign exchange market to serve the goal of investment promotion.

El-Tatawi's experience as an economist with the United Nations and the World Bank should be useful as she continues Egypt's four-year-old policy of funneling foreign assistance as loans to the private sector through the commercial banks.

El-Tatawi takes on the ministry of economy minus the Foreign Trade Department, which Ahmed Gweili, minister of trade and supply, won for his firm stance against commercial fraud and monopoly in the local market. Since Egypt became a founding member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the department has been for-

mulating measures to dismantle non-tariff barriers to trade in accordance with the GATT agreement. Gweili's ministry will now be charged with preparing the draft of anti-dumping and anti-trust laws, and with establishing the agencies that will execute these laws to protect local industries against unfair trade practices.

Still hammering away at a Herculean task, Atef Ebeid, minister of the Public Enterprise Sector, Administrative Development and Environment Affairs, will continue his task in restructuring and privatising the public sector.

Four years into the programme, Minister Ebeid has succeeded in selling off part of the state's stakes in a number of profitable companies, which have been snapped up at the stock exchange. However, the real challenge will emerge when the state begins selling loss-making companies, which carry huge debts and employ hundreds of thousands of workers. Ebeid's ability to reconcile the necessity of riding the state budget of this burden — given the difficulty of finding buyers willing to take it on — with the limitations imposed by the labour force will be sorely tested.

Perhaps one new cabinet minister Ebeid can rely on for help in dealing with public sector affairs is Minister of Industry Suleiman Reda, who brings his 30-year experience in the public sector in the post. Reda spent some 12 years in the public-sector aluminium giant, the Egyptian Aluminium Company, in which he conducted a massive restructuring and expansion project.

For the post of minister of state for planning, Ganzouri chose Zafar El-Bishri, who, as deputy chairman of the National Investment Bank (NIB) since 1984 had been second-in-command to El-Ganzouri, who had headed the NIB while he himself was minister of planning.

The new cabinet takes on a mixed inheritance. The first phase of reforms, initiated in 1991, have achieved marked success in the monetary and fiscal areas. Government figures indicate that the average annual inflation rate was down to about 8 per cent last November, the budget deficit has been brought down to a record 1.7 per cent of GDP, the current account surplus is projected to be 1 per cent of GDP, and international reserves stand at above \$18 billion, covering 22 months of imports.

On the structural side, however, the picture is less bright. Productivity is low and gross domestic investment is about 24 per cent of GDP. Experts say that for Egypt to double its current growth rate from 4.5 per cent to 9 per cent, gross domestic investment must increase to about 33 per cent of GDP. A massive balance of trade deficit approaching \$8 billion persists offsetting a 60 per cent jump in non-cotton, non-oil exports.

However, their diverse but equally testing responsibilities aside, the immediate task facing the new ministers is the new round of negotiations with the International Monetary Fund over Egypt's economic policy. The IMF team due to arrive in Cairo later this month will hold the first talks with Egyptian officials since their brief meeting last October in Washington DC, which was held on the fringe of the annual meetings of the IMF and the World Bank. The meetings represented a breakthrough in Egypt-IMF relations after an IMF assessment of the Egyptian economy showed that it was on the road to recovery, with growth rates higher than projected and exports taking off. However, IMF endorsement of the country's economic policies, which is necessary for Egypt to obtain the last tranche of debt reduction that has been held up since 1993, is still being withheld pending the outcome of the upcoming negotiations. (see p.2)



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Opposition figures and political and economic analysts, speaking to Mona El-Nahhas and Rana Allam, rule out a policy shift following Kamal El-Ganzouri's appointment as prime minister, but some anticipate a faster pace of privatisation

## Faster privatisation

Around midnight on 4 January, Kamal El-Ganzouri completed the formation of his 32-member cabinet. The key portfolios of defence, foreign affairs, the interior and information remained in the same hands, but seven newcomers joined the cabinet, mainly filling portfolios dealing with finance, the economy and economic planning. Eight members of Atef Sidki's outgoing cabinet lost their jobs and three portfolios were merged with others — population was attached to the Ministry of Health, international cooperation with the Ministry of Economy and housing with the Ministry of Construction.

Opposition leaders, viewing the change as "limited", believe the new line-up will not lead to any major policy changes. However some interpret the concentration on change in economy-oriented portfolios as indicative that the pace of privatisation and the shift to a free-market economy will be stepped up.

But Adel Hussein, secretary-general of the Islamist-oriented Labour Party, alleges that the changes in portfolios took place mainly for personal reasons. "It was Sidki who appointed the outgoing ministers of economy and finance because they were his personal friends, and not for any objective reasons," Hussein said. "With Ganzouri taking over, it was natural that new faces, more in line with his policies, would be brought in."

Hussein had been expecting a cabinet change following the recent elections. But in his view the changes did not amount to much. "A deputy prime minister [Ganzouri] was elevated to prime minister, and the bulk of the cabinet remained unchanged," he said. "I am not expecting any major changes in the coming period, and I expect the general policy to remain the same."

Yassin Serageddin, chief of the parliamentary group of the Wafd Party, which supports free enterprise, was optimistic that the new cabinet would speed up the shift to a free-market economy. "The outgoing cabinet was very slow in implementing privatisation," he said. "This, in addition to soaring prices and mounting taxation, was the main reason behind the change in the economic portfolios."

Serageddin expressed the hope that Ganzouri, with his contacts in the world's monetary institutions and his grasp of the requirements of the 21st century, would correct the course of economic reform. "Any changes will be limited to the economy. State policy, particularly foreign policy, will remain the same," he said.

Serageddin also approved of the merger of the various ministries as a step leading to greater policy coordination and reduced expenditure. However according to Ragab Hemeida, secretary-general of the Liberal Party, the dividing, and then merging, of some portfolios reflected the state's lack of a clear vision. "People had expected that the ministers who had remained in office for nearly 20 years would be changed," Hemeida said. "However, what happened in the reshuffle was contrary to all expectations."

Like Serageddin, Hussein Abdel-Razek of the leftist Tagammu Party believes that the new cabinet will accelerate the transition to a free-market economy. In his view, Ganzouri was appointed as prime minister because he "is courageous enough to implement the second phase of the economic reform programme, which includes the privatisation of major companies and financial institutions."

## Getting reform back on track

Political and economic analysts agreed that under Ganzouri, who has a history of 14 years of cabinet service, the new administration would continue to follow in Atef Sidki's footsteps. Although they ruled out any major policy changes, some of them said the principal task of the new cabinet would be to reach agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and to "set the economic reform process back on track".

Mustafa Kamel El-Sayed, a professor of political science at Cairo University, does not believe that the change in the economic portfolios signals a change in economic policy. Ganzouri, he said, was deputy prime minister in the outgoing cabinet, and, as minister of planning for the past 14 years, was one of the architects of the nation's economic policies. Moreover, he led the Egyptian team in its negotiations with the IMF and the World Bank. "Therefore, it would be completely unreasonable to expect that the new cabinet would introduce changes in economic policy," El-Sayed said.

He said the fact that some portfolios changed hands "was probably due to the prime minister's wish to work with a group of people he knows well and can work smoothly with". He added that some former cabinet members were too close to the former prime minister to work with his successor.

Judging by precedents, the new cabinet will remain in office for a long time, El-Sayed said, because President Mubarak does not like to make changes in quick succession. "So, if the kind of political stability that the country has experienced for the past 15 years continues, one would expect the new cabinet to remain in its present form for years to come," he said.

Agreeing that no major changes should be expected, Salama Ahmed Salama, one of *Al-Ahram's* senior columnists, pointed out that the

new cabinet had been instructed by President Hosni Mubarak to build on what has already been achieved. However, he added, the main task of the new cabinet would be to reach a new agreement with the IMF.

To senior political analyst Lutfi El-Kholi, the cabinet changes amounted to no more than a "reshuffle of posts", and he expected no shift in policy. Since the days of President Gamal Abdel-Nasser, cabinet ministers have been technocrats running government departments, and have played no part in politics. Like El-Sayed, El-Kholi believes the new cabinet will remain in office for a long time to come.

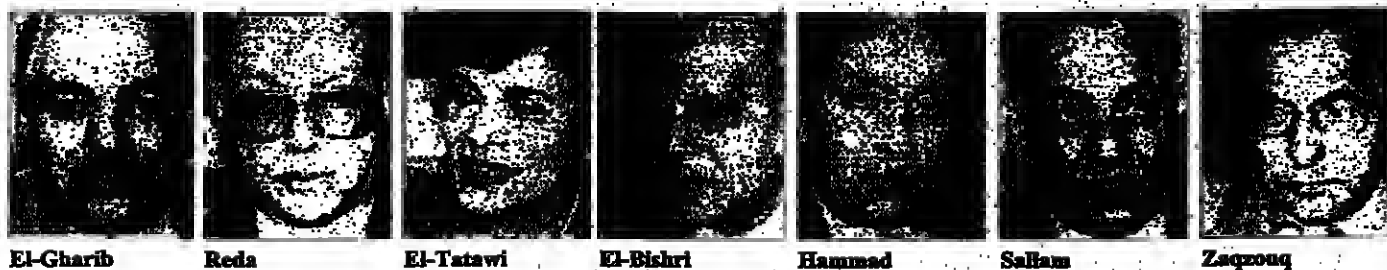
Heba Handoussa, general manager of the Economic Research Forum, used different language to describe the new cabinet's principal task. Declaring that a possible policy change was not the main issue, she said that the goal was to set the economic reform process back on track. She described the new ministers with economic portfolios as "very competent" and said they had been carefully chosen.

Economist Ismail Sabri Abdallah, chairman of the Third World Forum, believes that the new ministers in charge of the economic portfolios are "very promising". And yet, he said, any change in economic policy "depends on the relationship between various groups in society. The minister of economy is not the only decision-maker; there is the cabinet and the president of the republic as well."

Alieddin Hilal, the dean of the Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University, said it was too early to pass judgement on the new cabinet or to make forecasts. His attitude is that we will simply have to wait and see: "We will have to wait until the cabinet has had time to get into its work, then we will know," he said.



The cabinet will meet every Wednesday under the chairmanship of El-Ganzouri, right, who appears above with Wail, Metwalli and Tantawi.



El-Gharib Reda El-Tatawi El-Bishri Hammad Salama Zaqqouq

## Cabinet newcomers

Seven ministers have been appointed to the cabinet for the first time. They are:

### Mohieddin El-Gharib

Minister of finance  
Born in Cairo in 1937. Married with three sons. Received a university degree in economics in 1957, a master's in 1963 and a doctorate three years later. Participated in research for long-term planning at the Planning Institute and was appointed as adviser to the minister of economy's technical office in 1968. He also served between 1968 and 1972 as economic adviser to the General Organisation for Textiles. Between 1972 and 1978 he worked as director of projects for the Abu Dhabi Economic Development Fund and later as board member of the Joint Arab Investment Company. The last post he held before joining the cabinet was the chairmanship of the General Authority for Investment and Free Zones.

### Saleiman Reda

Minister of industry  
Born in Cairo in 1936. Married with

two sons. After obtaining a degree in engineering from Cairo University in 1962, Reda worked for the Nasr Piping Company before joining the Egyptian Aluminium Company in 1972. He rose to be its board chairman in 1983 — a post which he continued to hold until he was appointed to the cabinet.

### Naval El-Tatawi

Minister of economy and international cooperation  
Born in Cairo. Married with two sons. Holds a degree in economics from the American University in Cairo (AUC) and master's and doctorate degrees from the University of Wisconsin. She began her career with the National Bank of Egypt before working as an economic expert for the United Nations and the World Bank. She later joined the Arab Investment Bank and rose to be its board chairwoman in 1992. She was one of 10 people appointed by President Hosni Mubarak to membership of the People's Assembly in December.

### Zafer El-Bishri

Minister of state for planning  
Born in Cairo in 1931. One of the nation's top economic planning experts, he has lent his expertise to Sudan and the United Arab Emirates. In 1981, he became first under-secretary at the Ministry of Planning and was appointed vice-president of the National Investment Bank under Kamal El-Ganzouri in 1984.

### Talast Hammad

Minister for cabinet affairs  
Born in 1934 in Daqahliya. After obtaining a law degree in 1955, he worked as assistant district attorney in various parts of Giza, Port Said and Cairo, later rising to be a judge and then chairman of the Alexandria Court of Appeals. In 1989, he was made secretary-general of the specialised national councils.

### Dr Ismail Salama

Minister of health and population  
Born in 1941 in Menoufiya. Married with three children. Graduating from

the Faculty of Medicine in 1964, he later became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons (FRCS) in London, received a doctorate degree from the University of Glasgow, and worked as professor of heart surgery at Ain Shams University. Salama has also served as a member of the Shura Council since 1992 and is chairman of the council's health committee.

### Mahmoud Zaqqouq

Minister of Al-Azhar (religious endowments)  
Born in 1933 in Daqahliya. Married with one daughter. Graduated from the Arabic Language Faculty of Al-Azhar University in 1959 and obtained a doctorate from Munich University in 1968. He taught at Al-Azhar's Usul Al-Din (Religious Fundamentals) Faculty, later becoming its dean. He was appointed vice-president of Al-Azhar University two months ago. He has written 15 books on Islam and Islamic philosophy.

Compiled by Nevine Khalil

## Layoffs at US Embassy

The three-week partial shutdown of the US government has ended, but several Egyptian employees of the US Embassy have lost their jobs and others are worried, writes *Gihan Shahine*

After forcing a partial shutdown of the US government for three weeks, the Republican-dominated Congress has approved legislation that will put 280,000 essential federal workers back in their offices on full pay until 26 January. Although the Republicans appeared to be making a small retreat from their hard-line strategy of using the cash-flow crisis to force President Bill Clinton's acceptance of their seven-year balanced budget plan, what will happen after January 26 remains unclear.

As a result of Congress' move, Embassy in Cairo, which in the words of press attaché Rick Roberts, "had literally been operating without funding until the end of last week, with employees receiving only half-pay for the last pay period". Staff will be paid the remainder of their salaries by the end of this week. The consular section is back in business and the cultural centre's library will also reopen this week.

But because of the cash-flow problem, 28 Egyptian employees — 22 working for the State Department and six for the US Information Service (USIS) — have been laid off, Roberts said. The staff reduction process, he explained, has taken two forms: the furlough system applied to American civil servants, and the "reduction in force" (RIF) system, which is applicable to Egyptian employees of the US government.

Under the furlough system, an employee's job is suspended for a certain period until the cash-flow problem is resolved, with the employee guaranteed full payment for the suspension period. But RIF means dismissal. The laid-off Egyptian staff receive a severance package, which includes severance pay amounting to two months' salary plus a month's salary for every year of employment, in addition to any holiday pay due.

While some of the laid-off employees have found consolation in the fact that

they had been dismissed because of budgetary problems and not for lack of efficiency, others felt their dismissal was discriminatory. They asked why the embassy had not given all its employees part-time jobs instead of dismissing some and keeping others, and why the Egyptian staff had been dismissed rather than furloughed.

"Egyptians cannot be furloughed as the Egyptian labour law does not allow it," countered assistant press attaché Robert Ogden. Press attaché Roberts added that cutbacks are made according to complex objective criteria.

Employees are categorised according to their jobs by the personnel department. When a decision is made to reduce the number of jobs at a certain level, the personnel department starts the process of rating those who are doing similar functions according to their evaluation record over the past five years, the number of years they have served the federal government and the

speed with which they have been promoted. The required number of lay-offs are then made according to these criteria. In some cases, a whole programme is eliminated.

"It is a very difficult decision for a manager to lay off an employee," Roberts said. "No one likes to lose an efficient worker. So we often try to recommend them to other missions. We all hope this nightmare will end soon."

But it remains unclear whether there will be further federal staff cutbacks, whether money will continue to flow in and whether those who are back at work will continue to keep their jobs. It all depends on the final budget, which the White House and Congress should agree on by the 26th of this month.

"We are in a situation where it is difficult to project," said Roberts. "The administration, however, seems clearly committed to making the federal government staff smaller, at this moment no one can tell how much smaller."

## Businessmen's 'lobby' in new Assembly

In an age of free enterprise, business is seeking political power. This was one of the conclusions to be drawn from the 1995 parliamentary elections, in which a large number of businessmen ran for office, and 41 of them won seats. Some are newcomers to the political scene, and their primary target appears to be the acquisition of parliamentary immunity. Others seem more interested in shaping the new market-oriented laws that will have a direct bearing on their business interests.

Rifaat El-Said, secretary-general of the leftist Tagammu Party, made a point of dividing the businessmen who ran for election into two categories. One group, he said, "cannot be called businessmen in the true sense of the word be-

A large number of businessmen contested the recent General Assembly elections, and many of them won seats. Why do entrepreneurs want to become parliamentarians? Gamal Essam El-Din analyses the new phenomenon

cause, as far as I can make out, they made their money by illegal means, such as smuggling, selling sub-standard food or trading in state-owned land." El-Said blamed this group for the acts of thuggery and vote-buying which were rampant in the 29 November ballot and 6 December runoffs.

On the other hand, he added, "There is another group of genuine businessmen, highly respected for their large-scale enterprises. These people are members of the National Democratic Party (NDP) and the Wafd."

According to El-Said, the objective of the first group is political power and parliamentary immunity, while the second group is seeking a stronger influence in the formulation of new economic laws that directly affect their interests.

Yassin Serageddin, chief of the Wafd Party's parliamentary group, agreed with El-Said's assessment. Since the government was increasingly depending on the private sector to raise the volume of investments, he said, it was natural for businessmen to seek a greater say in shaping investment and market-oriented legislation.

Of the 41 businessmen who won seats, 16 are members of two

prominent business organisations: the Egyptian Businessmen's Association (EBA) and the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham). EBA members include Mahmoud Mohamed Abul-Nasr (a wool blanket manufacturer), Amin Hammad (a public contractor and wood trader), Mamdouh Thabet Mekki (an exporter and importer of leather products), Mahmoud Azzam (a private contractor and also an import-export trader), Talast Mustafa (another private contractor) and Mohamed Abul-Enein (a ceramics manufacturer). All of them are NDP members.

Parliamentarians who also belong to AmCham include Ala'a Kamel Diab (executive manager of a group of five companies involved in petroleum services, land reclamation, electronics, contracting and urban development) and Ahmed Khairi (shipping and maritime activities, tourist and travel services and land reclamation).

The businessmen have managed to join some of the Assembly's key committees, enabling them to form a strong lobby. The 39-person economic committee includes 14 businessmen active in banking, foreign exchange, insurance and other economic spheres. According to the committee's chairman, Dr Mustafa El-Said, the committee will deal with a large amount of proposed economic legislation, including an anti-trust law, laws regulating chambers of commerce and foreign exchange, the unified investment law, the commercial markets law and a foreign trade law.

The 27-person plan and budget committee, which deals with customs regulations and taxes on investment projects, includes 11 businessmen. Eleven others, many of them public contractors, are serving on the 49-person housing committee. One of this committee's main tasks will be to discuss a new housing law which will revamp the apartment-rental system to encourage greater private investment in housing. Ten businessmen, most of them industrialists, are serving on the 46-person industry and energy committee.

In addition to the 41 businessmen who are Assembly members, 31 others have seats in the Shura Council.

## Al-Yassar back on the market

The leftist monthly *Al-Yassar* is back on the newsstands after financial problems forced a two-month halt in publication. *Khaled Dawoud* discovers how the magazine plans to survive

The leftist monthly magazine *Al-Yassar* (The Left), which folded in October because of financial problems, resumed publication at the beginning of January. Supporters of the magazine, which serves as a forum for Khaled Mohieddin's Tagammu Party, had opposed the shutdown. They charged that the party's weekly mouthpiece, *Al-Ahali*, could no longer properly be described as an opposition newspaper, because it was increasingly leaning towards the government line.

Hussein Abdel-Razek, *Al-Yassar's* editor-in-chief, said that he had been able to issue the magazine again despite having raised only 40 per cent of the required finance, because he had received further pledges of financial support. An association called "Friends of the Left" has been formed, with each member promising to pay LE100 as an annual subscription. Abdel-Razek said that at least 500 people had promised to join the association. "This will provide us with LE50,000 annually, which is enough to cover our losses and ensure that publication will not be interrupted," he said.

Despite being 60 per cent short so far, he was optimistic "that more money will come in, and we will have more than 500 members in the association".

The January issue lashed out at the way the government had run the recent parliamentary elections, claiming that the widespread violence that had marred the balloting had dashed public confidence in democracy as a means of political change.

The same issue featured a new section on women's affairs, which, Abdel-Razek said, was an attempt to oppose calls by Islamists to keep women confined to the home. Another article, by Abdel-Razek, warned of alleged new plans for the Middle East which would strengthen the US presence in the region and assure the dominance of Israel. And, possibly to give the impression that

there was hope of a worldwide leftist revival, *Al-Yassar* analysed the results of the recent Russian parliamentary elections in which the communists won the majority of seats. Another article condemned the military regime in Nigeria and its human-rights record, particularly the execution of eight human rights activists.

"We always intended to resume publication, because we believe that *Al-Yassar*, as Egypt's only monthly leftist publication, fills a gap in the cultural scene," said Abdel-Razek. "I believe that despite its ups and downs, the left is an integral part of Egyptian politics and society."

Abdel-Razek denied that the sharp tone used by *Al-Yassar*, when compared to the official statements of the Tagammu and its mouthpiece *Al-Ahali*, necessarily reflected the existence of divisive factions within the party. "Actually the presence of *Al-Yassar* reflects the democracy we have inside the Tagammu Party," he said. "Any party that does not include different views is a dead party."

Although Tagammu Party leaders deny that they have reached an under-the-table deal with the government, they concede that the party's opposition to the militant Islamist groups has brought it closer to the government. Those on the left of the party, however, insist on holding the government responsible for the country's social and economic ills.

"The party leadership recognises that there are different views inside the Tagammu, and this is why they have supported the republication of *Al-Yassar*," Abdel-Razek said. "We want the magazine to serve as a forum for all leftists, including those who disagree with Tagammu's official line."

Edited by Wadie Kirolos

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# USAID grants under fire

Members of the People's Assembly last week sharply criticised two US grant assistance agreements aimed at supporting agricultural credit and research. Gamal Essam El-Din reports

The newly-elected People's Assembly kicked off its first sessions of the year by debating six US grants to various sectors in Egypt. But, of the six, two, earmarked for the agricultural sector, the Agricultural Production and Credit Project (APCP) and the National Agricultural Research Project (NARP) came under fire by a number of opposition and independent MPs.

Arguing that US grants have consistently proven to have a negative impact on Egyptian farmers, El-Badri Farhali, an MP for the leftist Tagammu party, said, "Before approving anything, we have to ask ourselves to what extent Egyptian farmers benefited from this kind of grant." He went on to say that usually most of the proceeds from these grants are used to extend loans to farmers at "oppressive" interest rates.

According to the NARP agreement report, the aim of the NARP grant, which has increased in value more than six times from \$30 million to \$194 million, is to upgrade and modernise research applications in Egypt to increase cultivation.

Ragab Hilal Hemeida, a Liberal Party MP, demanded that the Ministries of Agriculture and International Cooperation submit to the People's Assembly a report detailing the benefits offered Egyptian farmers by this type of grant.

"Now we are required to approve raising the amount of this grant from \$194 million to \$198 million, but before taking this step, we have to know exactly what is the impact of these grants on Egyptian farmers," said Hemeida.

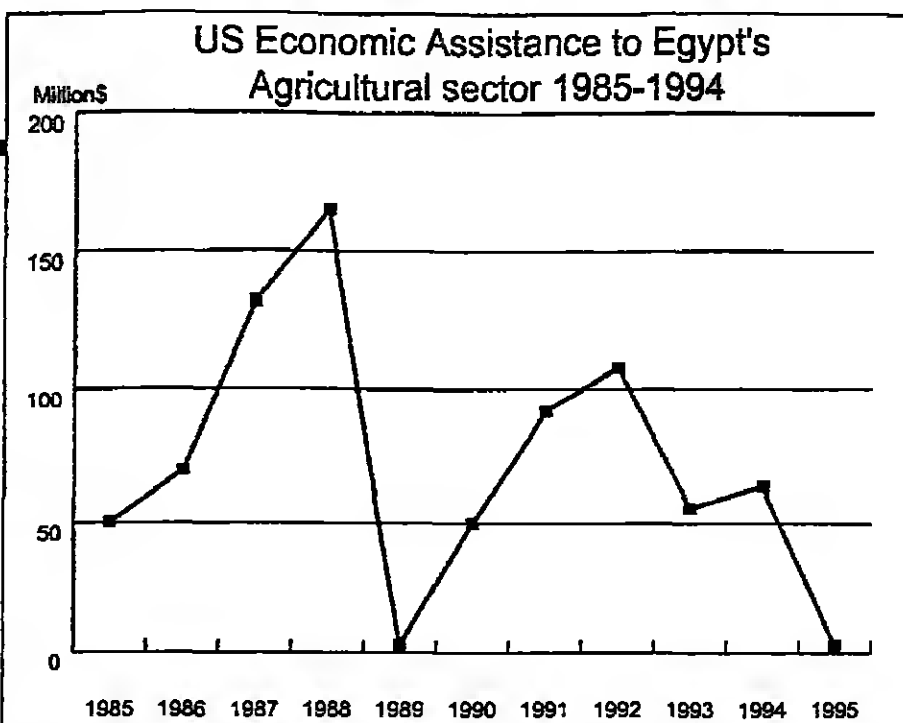
However, Ahmed Abu Zeid, leader of the ruling National Democratic Party's parliamentary bloc, lauded the grant, emphasising it would lead to high productivity, effective pest control, and to developing new varieties of crops.

With this, Abdel-Fattah El-Baradi, an independent from Al-Gharbiya province, begged to differ. He said the grant had not increased the productivity of the strategic crop, cotton. On the contrary, he contended, the production of cotton has been constantly declining over the last 10 years, falling from 3 million qantars in 1984 to 895,000 qantars in 1994.

The report on the APCP grant agreement also raised a few sceptical eyebrows. The objective of the APCP grant, whose value has increased from \$35 million in 1987 to \$309 million in 1995, said the report, is to upgrade the services provided to farmers by the Principal Bank for Development and Agricultural Credit (PBDAC) in terms of increasing the value of low interest loans and credit allocated to farmers.

This grant, said the report, has already increased the amount of loans provided to farmers to LE5 billion since the grant programme began, covering 70 per cent of the costs of crop production.

However, a number of members of the National Democratic Party and the opposition criticised this grant. Abdel-Rehim El-Ghoul, the NDP's MP for Qena, stressed that the PBDAC no longer gives low interest loans, showing that "PBDAC now acts like a commercial bank and



has nothing at all to do with development — except its name." As a result, he claimed, the USAID grants have actually increased the loan burdens on farmers. He called upon the Ministry of Agriculture to drop these loans.

Ali Far' El-Bab, the only Muslim Brotherhood MP, claimed that the loan was never used by PBDAC to give low interest loans. He said

interest rates on the PBDAC's loans to farmers had, in fact, jumped to 18 per cent, further encumbering the farmers. Faisal El-Sharkawi, an NDP MP from Gharbiya, added that this kind of grant is no longer viable because the government now considers the PBDAC as a commercial bank which has to transfer its profits each year to the Central Bank of Egypt.

## New showpiece on the Nile

A new barrage across the Nile promises to do more than solve navigation problems in Upper Egypt. Amira Ibrahim went on a cruise to the site

Expediting Nile traffic, producing electricity and saving water are only some of the many benefits of a new LE650 million computerised barrage at Esna in Upper Egypt.

The new barrage, which came into operation in the summer, replaced an older one, built in 1908, which had been causing major problems upstream for navigation and irrigation and sparking electricity shortages.

Before the new project was finished, scores of Nile cruisers packed with tourists ran aground because of the low level of water at the old barrage, which also suffered from other defects including aging locks. Officials say the new barrier is expected to solve most of these problems.

"Nile cruisers used to spend hours in front of the old lock waiting for their turn to arrive," said Ibrahim Abdel-Farrag, the engineer in charge of the lock and spillway.

The old lock was designed to handle one middle-sized vessel in 55 minutes. Sometimes ships were stranded for days during the Nile's low-water period. Thanks to the new barrage, Abdel-Farrag said, navigation is now without obstacles.

The computer-operated lock, which is 160 metres long and 17 metres wide, enables the simultaneous passage of two large ships in 25 minutes. It allows ships to pass through smoothly by efficiently controlling the level of water needed to allow the ships to go through," said Abdel-Farrag.

The gates of the lock and the side channels are operated by an electronic network, which includes a control tower and hydraulic systems. "I don't have to watch the gates, the boats or even the water level.

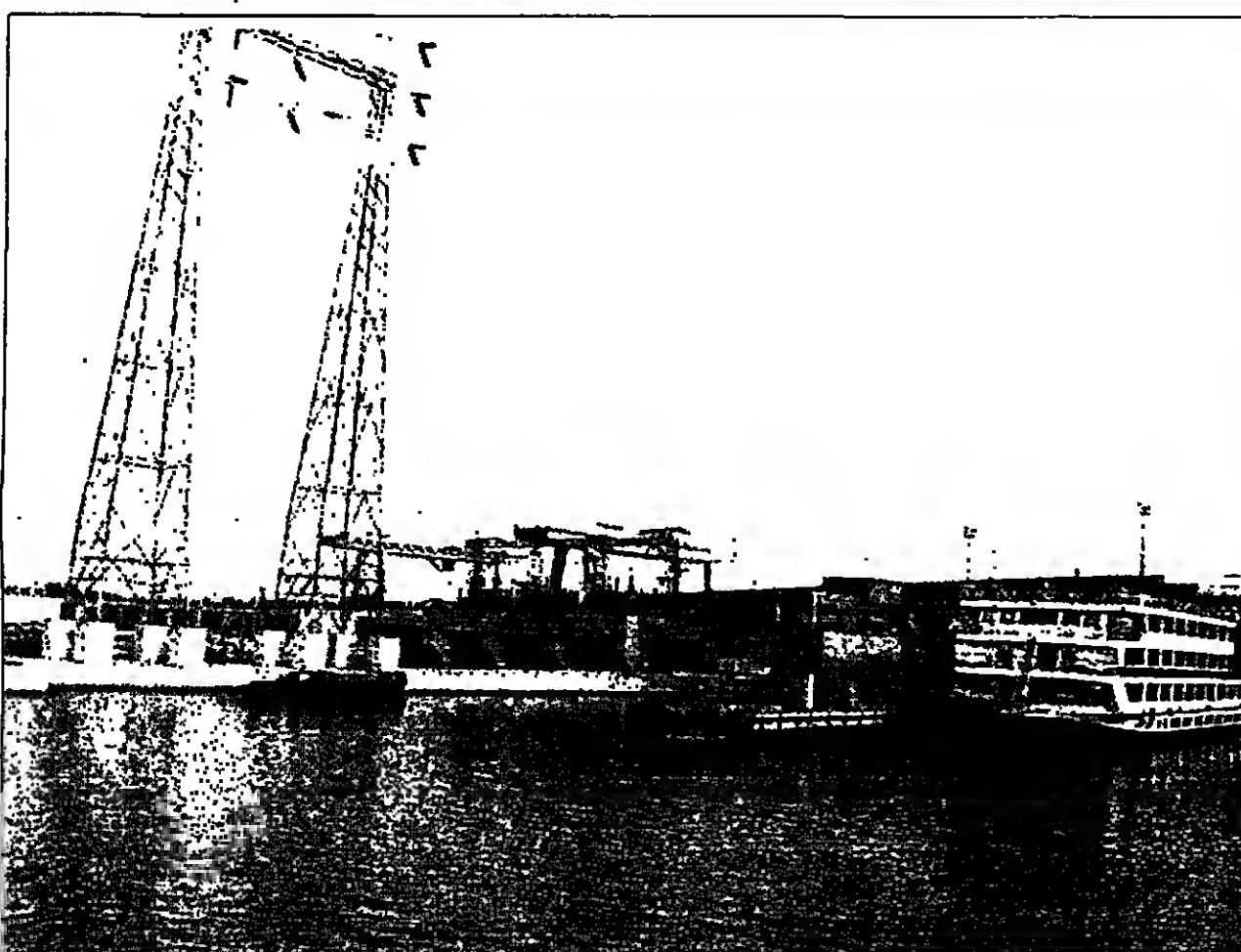


photo: Khaled El-Fiqi

It is all here on the control panel which operates the lock electronically," Abdel-Farrag said.

In 1948, the old barrage was raised several metres to meet increasing irrigation requirements in both Aswan and Qena governorates in Upper Egypt. But several decades later, the amount of water being rerouted by the old barrier was

still not enough to satisfy the requirements resulting from the major agricultural expansion in the area.

"The operating system of the old barrage caused a waste of some 1.5 billion cubic metres of water every year," said Abdel-Hamid El-Sadek, director of Upper Egypt Public Works. Using the new equipment, operators can now open and

close the gates by pressing buttons which guarantee a sufficient volume of water without waste. El-Sadek said that the water saved by the new dam could irrigate thousands of feddans of agricultural land in the area.

The difference in water levels on either side of the barrage is also being exploited to generate electric power. "The

power plant in the new barrage is equipped with six bulb turbines which are much more advanced than those of the High Dam," said Raafat Ali Soliman, operating engineer at Esna Power Plant. According to Soliman, power generated from the new barrage reduces pressure on the High Dam power plant and meets the increasing requirements of the

new industrial areas that have been established in Qena recently.

The old barrage linked the two banks of the Nile by a road and a mobile bridge over the lock, allowing vessels to pass only at certain times during the day. The new barrage includes a flyover, which enables ships and overland traffic to use the facility at the same time.

The construction of the new Esna barrage, which took six years, provided 3,000 job opportunities. Now, some 300 people have permanent jobs at the site. "The new barrage is another showpiece on the Nile," said Yehia El-Bahmasawi, governor of Qena. "All the work was carried out under Egyptian supervision, by the Ministry of Public Works and Water Resources and engineers from the Ministry of Power."

El-Bahmasawi said that a large number of engineers, technicians and workers had benefited from participating in the construction of the barrage and would be assigned to other barrage construction projects in Assiut and Naga Hammadi.

El-Bahmasawi also regards the new barrage as an incentive for businessmen from Upper Egypt to invest their money in the area. "Investors from the area used to take their money away, preferring to base their businesses in northern cities such as Cairo, Alexandria and Mansoura. The completion of the barrage is part of the government's attempts to put Upper Egypt on the investment map, the governor said. Other plans include upgrading railways in the south. "These steps are a major contribution to the economic development of the region," El-Bahmasawi said.

### Market report

#### GMI slip and slide

ALL good things must come to an end, as was the case in the Capital Market's short-lived recovery. While the General Market Index increased by 1.05 points for the week ending 28 December, the GMI lost 2.33 points to level off at 211.73 the week ending 4 January. Along with the decline in the GMI, the volume of transactions also fell sharply, sliding from LE75 million in LE51.18 million.

The manufacturing sector's index witnessed an even steeper decline, losing 4.5 points to close at 279.46 points. This was the result of a fall in the share value of 23 companies. The Paints and Chemical Industries Company's shares lost LE30 per share in close at LE650. Drastic as this drop was, investors in El-Sharqia Cotton and Linen Company were even more depressed. The company's shares lost 9.52 per cent of their value, the greatest loss percentage-wise sustained by any manufacturing sector company. Its shares closed at LE9.5 per share.

Other manufacturing sector companies, however, fared better. El-Nasr Clothing and Textiles Company's (Kah) shares gained LE2.5 to top off at LE156.5 per share. In addition, the shares of two cement companies, the Portland Torab Cement Co. and the Helwan Cement Co., realised marginal gains. Portland Cement's shares closed at LE48.9 while those of Helwan closed at LE36.5.

Similar gains were accrued by companies in the wholesale and retail trading sector, whose index gained an impressive 21.66 points to close at 132.67. This increase was the result of a LE200 jump in the value of The Egypt Trading and Marketing Company's shares, which closed at LE300.

The financial sector's index, however, slid by 1.5 to close at 224.15. Shares of the Misr Exterior Bank lost LE25.25 to level off at LE479.75 per share. And, although the trading in the company's shares accounted for 20.37 per cent of total market transactions, shares of the Commercial International Bank (CIB) lost LE18.75 per share to close at LE490 per share. Trading in Delta International Bank's shares accounted for the greatest volume of market transactions. Approximately 49.2 per cent, or 792,373 shares of the bank were traded.

Again, trading of service sector company stocks was slow, with only those of the Misr Hotels Company (Hilun) registering a gain in value. The company's shares inched up by LE0.5 to close at LE55.75 per share.

In all, the shares of 12 companies increased in value, 39 decreased and 37 remained unchanged.

Edited by Ghada Ragab

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## The logic of reform

Simon Bromley argues that only political reform can produce a domestic pro-adjustment coalition essential for sustaining reform

There are growing signs that the international financial institutions (IFIs) are becoming increasingly impatient with the cautious pace of implementing growth-oriented reforms. This is especially true of the liberalisation of the foreign trade sector and the privatisation of the dominant public sector. Without rapid progress on these fronts, the World Bank believes that the growth necessary to sustain the macroeconomic adjustment thus far achieved will not be forthcoming.

The expansion of the private sector is the main objective of the second phase of adjustment. However, there are obstacles to the development of the private sector which are inextricably linked to the policies of the reform programme.

Under Sadat's *infitah*, a large-scale private sector began to develop, particularly through joint ventures, both in agriculture and industry. However, many have questioned the power of the emerging commercial bourgeoisie and its allies as well as the liberal character of the *infitah*.

Some have even gone as far as to say that the economic liberalisation process has been constrained by the commercial bourgeoisie's dependence on the state. But if the commercial bourgeoisie is weak and the *infitah* was not genuine liberalisation, then what was the logic of change? One answer ventured is that international factors driven by unsustainable levels of indebtedness brought about economic liberalisation.

While these international pressures are real enough, it is somewhat misleading to see them as somehow "external", as if the abolition of the IMF and the World Bank would obviate the need for adjustment or that debt write-off would solve Egypt's problems.

If reform started as an attempt to cope with the fiscal and foreign exchange constraints of the state-led model of development, how solid are the preconditions favouring a private sector-led model of development?

There are genuine doubts about the appropriateness of the strategy called for by the IFIs. It may be that the strength of the coalition of endowments (for peasants, organised labour and the intelligentsia) which formed the social base of the import-substituting industrialisation (ISI) model is too strong, and the power of reform coalition too weak, to make reform politically feasible at the present time.

With regard to the reform agenda of the IFIs, it is possible to argue that things could and should be done differently. World Bank orthodoxy can be challenged on a number of grounds.

In the first instance, there is no significant empirical relationship between economic growth rates and reduced vulnerability to external shocks, on the one hand, and either outward oriented policies or export promotion and trade openness, on the other.

Besides, there is no simple relationship between outward oriented policies and, either trade openness, or stable financial openness. Nor is there a direct relation between exchange rate policy and export shares and capital movements.

While it is true that trade openness does increase flexibility and the ability to cope with external shocks, financial openness may significantly reduce the ability to adjust to exogenous shocks. Equally, there is no unambiguous economic logic for a speedy reform process, nor for rapid privatisation of public assets.

More practically, both the comparative experience of the successful liberalisers that the World Bank identifies as models (Japan and the East Asian newly-industrialised countries), and economic theory suggest that there is a preferred order for optimum economic liberalisation.

Roughly, fiscal control comes first, followed by domestic financial liberalisation and price and trade reform, with privatisation of the banking system and the freeing of foreign exchange on the capital account coming last. The successful Asian economies only removed state control over domestic and international capital markets late in the day, having had very extensive controls during the ISI phase and their early experience with export promotion.

These considerations are of direct relevance to Egypt. The performance of state-owned enterprises has been negatively affected by adverse incentive structures as compared with the private sector. Again, the first stage of reform here is not to privatised, but to allow the public and private sector to operate on equal terms. Only when this, more or less, is accomplished can privatisation be unambiguously pursued.

In the case of foreign trade and investment, while it is right to turn quotas into tariffs, and to reduce these over time, there is also a case for targeted export subsidies to support export growth. There is also a strong case for targeting specific sectors to open to foreign investment, and to impose exchange control and export requirements upon these activities.

In sum, while there is a good case for export promotion and trade liberalisation, the case for rapid privatisation, especially of the banking sector, and for full liberalisation of the capital account is not well founded in theory or in the comparative experience of successful late industrialisers.

Whatever strategy is appropriate, coalition building is both difficult and essential. The problem here has been that the constituencies mobilised and created by state-led ISIs were inclusionist and nationalist, while structural adjustment is exclusionist and opens the economy to foreigners.

Support for reforms might be expected from public sector managers seeking greater autonomy and an opportunity to transfer their skills and assets to the private sector and from the private bourgeoisie. Capitalists will have to come from somewhere. Given the weakness of much of the private sector, and given also the split between the small and micro-informal sector and medium and large concerns, it is not obvious that a critical mass for reform exists. After all if Arab socialism flourished because there were no socialists, what would be the fate of Arab capitalism without real capitalists?

The final and most basic impediment may be the character of the political system. The National Democratic Party remains a tool of government control rather than an agency of change, and the patron-client relations of corporatism forms continue to act as a brake on radical change. In addition, this kind of limited, pluralist accommodation of the bourgeoisie and elite interests makes impossible the negotiation of a social and political bargain with those who will bear most of the costs of reform, the workers, poor peasants and the urban poor.

Rather than push for a democratic opening that might allow a reform programme to be negotiated with the population, the government and its international backers appear to have opted for muddling through reform in an indeterminate fashion, and if necessary, by an authoritarian response to the crisis.

It is the problems about the appropriate kind of reform, and those of forging a new pro-adjustment coalition, and perhaps most importantly, the fragmentation of power in the political system, rather than an abstract lack of commitment, which together explain the limits of the second phase of adjustment thus far. If this is so, then it strongly suggests that political reform is not an optional extra but a necessary prerequisite to economic success, if an authoritarian "solution" is to be avoided.

The writer is a professor in the Department of Politics at Leeds University.

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# Fatah versus Fatah

Controversy over candidates for the forthcoming Palestinian elections marks the opening shots in a struggle for Fatah's political soul," writes **Graham Usher** from Jerusalem

"The main contest in these elections is going to be between Fatah and Fatah," says Bassam Khaldi, a local Fatah activist from Gaza. The way the race is shaping up for Palestinians' first national suffrage to be held on 20 January suggests that he may be right.

On 5 January, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) appointed Central Elections Commission announced that there were 676 nominated candidates standing for the 88-seat Palestinian Council. Of these, a colossal 500 are running as "independents", mostly on the strength of being influential businessmen, clan leaders or national figures in one or other of the PNA's 16 designated electoral constituencies.

Of these independents, however, 150 are "unofficial" activists from Yasser Arafat's mainstream (and dominant) Fatah movement in the Occupied Territories who have chosen to stand against the "official" Fatah list of 75 candidates, approved by the Chairman himself.

The elections have brought to a head a crisis within Fatah's ranks which revolves less around ideology — the programmes of the "official" and "unofficial" candidates are virtually identical, and all are pro-Oslo and (ironically) pro-Arafat — than over what Fatah is or should become in the self rule.

Fatah's strength in Palestinian society is drawn from three main bases: loyalist elements of the PLO's old Tunis bureaucracy who are now functionaries in the PNA's various ministerial, civil and security apparatuses; the territories' traditional bourgeois and mercantile classes; and the generation of Fatah "fighters", who won their political spurs in the uprising, and whose weight lies in the poorer villages, refugee camps and prisons. The problem for Arafat with the elections was how to satisfy all three constituencies.

Last November, he formed a special 20-member Fatah "central committee" (FCC) whose task was to determine the final list of approved Fatah candidates. To this end, primaries by local Fatah groups were held across the West Bank and Gaza so that the FCC could "take into consideration" the choice of Fatah's grassroots organisation. But these primaries almost unanimously returned candidates representative of the activists rather than of the "outside" PLO or Palestine's elite families.

"Fatah activists didn't want independents who support Arafat or Fatah in general," says West Bank Fatah leader, Marwan Barghouti. In the primaries, "they chose people from the movement who were active in the Intifada, who were in prison, who suffered from the occupation. These people are the best qualified to represent the Palestinian people."

But neither Arafat nor the FCC wanted this. Rather, says an "independent" Fatah candidate in Ramallah, Abdel-Fateh Hamayal, "the FCC's view was that the official list should contain well-known national figures, regardless of whether they are Fatah or not."

In the ensuing struggle over the list between the activists and the Arafat-appointed FCC, it was, predictably, the latter which prevailed.

In Jerusalem, the FCC ignored the selection of its own Fatah members in favour of a "national unity bloc" made up of Islamist, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and "national figures" such as former PLO spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi. This bloc eventually fell apart with the decision by Hamas and the PFLP to boycott the elections, but the bitterness it caused among Fatah cadres in Jerusalem — especially those who were "bumped" in favour of non-Fatah candidates — has led at least two well-known Fatah activists to run as independents.

In Nabulus, Arafat allegedly replaced the popular Intifada Fatah leader and ex-deportee, Hussam Khader, on the official list with representatives of the city's powerful capitalist class, such as Maher Masri and Shalwa. The upshot is that Khader, along with four other Fatah grassroots leaders, has now formed a "Freedom and Independence" bloc to stand against official Fatah. And, in Ramallah, activists like Hamayal and the ex-prison leader, Qaddura Fares — despite coming first and second in Fatah's primary for the city — were forced to stand aside on the official list in favour of millionaire Yaqub Haseemeh and the PNA's current sports minister and member of the national Fida Party, Azmi Shuabti. Both Hamayal and Fares are now running as independents, despite warnings from the FCC that "all unofficial Fatah candidates should withdraw or face expulsion from the movement."

These actions are very likely the opening shots in a struggle over Fatah's future political soul, one where the main fault-line will be less along the old divisions of "inside" and "outside", or refugee and resident, than between those in Fatah who want it to become a modern political party and those who wish to preserve it as a "national" movement.

"I believe our decision to run [as independents] will strengthen Fatah's base in the Occupied Territories," said Hamayal, triggering a process where Fatah will be forced to adopt "clear social and economic policies" and have "leaders elected by the membership". Hussam Khader is not so sure. For him, the debate over the official list between Fatah's "leadership" and its grassroots base spells the end of the movement. "Fatah is dead," he said. "It has been superseded by the PNA, by the new realities thrown up by the Intifada and Oslo."

The coming "contest between Fatah and Fatah" in the elections may well show which of these two prognoses is nearer the mark.



PLO leader Yasser Arafat and Hamas spokesman Mahmud Zahar weep over the death of Hamas militant Yehya Ayyash, while Palestinians in the Gaza Strip pay their last respects (photo: AFP)

## The Engineer's final exit

A carefully timed explosion has blown away Hamas's top bomber, and much more besides, reports **Julie Till**

The death of Yehya Ayyash brought hundreds of thousands of Palestinians onto the streets in Gaza this week in protest at his assassination. "Peres, prepare your coffin," was the chilling response of those who took part in the funeral procession of "The Engineer", credited with a string of suicide bombings against Israeli targets.

For nearly three years, the former electrical engineering student topped Israel's wanted list, but managed to evade the security tentacles of Israeli intelligence — giving him almost mythical standing among his militant followers. That all came to an end on Friday, when a booby-trapped cellular phone exploded in his face.

"It is a criminal assassination with all the fingerprints of the Israeli Shin Bet," said former Minister of Planning and International Cooperation and Fatah election candidate Nabil Shaath in a telephone interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

It certainly bears the hallmarks of what Shaath describes as the

"vengeful attitude of the Israelis against those who have taken violent actions against them." In October, Islamic Jihad leader Fathi Shabqat was gunned down in Mafra, Israel, characteristically refused to deny or admit responsibility. In November of last year another Jihad activist, Hami Abed, opened his car door and was blown apart.

Mahmud Zahar, Hamas spokesman in the Gaza Strip, told the *Weekly* that not only Islamist militants have come under fire. Activists from Hamas, Jihad and even the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) have been killed by Israeli undercover units. The death of Ahmad Abu Rizk, a member of the Fatah Hawks, at the hands of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) two months after the PLO-Israel agreement was signed in Washington and one week after he was granted an amnesty by Israel, provoked huge unrest across the Gaza Strip in November 1993. Six pro-Oslo Fatah activists, were also killed in Jabaliya refugee camp in

March 1994 by an IDF undercover unit.

Ayyash was clearly a prime target for the Israeli security forces. "His assassination, as one of the heads of the Islamist military opposition, was at the top of Rabin's priorities before he died. It has now been achieved by the Shin Bet," Ibrahim Ghoshe, Hamas spokesman in Jordan, told the *Weekly*.

His death will also boost morale within the Israeli security establishment embarrassed by its failure to prevent the assassination of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. But the timing of Ayyash's death is significant for another reason. Ayyash's assassination comes only two weeks before the elections to the Palestinian interim council on 20 January.

In the self-rule areas, Ayyash's death marks a painful and embarrassing blow to the credibility of the PNA and to its claim to be the sole protector of Palestinians in the self-rule areas. It is a predicament which Hamas has been quick to exploit.

At the funeral of Ayyash, Hamas leaders called for weapons confiscated by the authority to be returned. "Now everyone is sure that the PNA is unable to protect anyone. We have to look for ways to protect ourselves and that includes Fatah, Jihad and Hamas," argued Zahar.

Palestinians have been plunged back into political uncertainty and economic instability after the recent euphoria surrounding the withdrawal of Israeli troops from six and a half towns in the West Bank. Israel, citing fear of reprisal attacks, has closed off the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In doing so around 50,000 Palestinian workers have been cut off from their jobs inside Israel and the transfer of goods has been held up at crossing points.

Ironically, Ayyash's killing follows a four-month lull in the cycle of violence. "It comes at a time when Hamas had decided to stop its violent actions and follow a peaceful road after our (PNA) meeting in Cairo," argued Shaath. While that may be reading a little too much

into the dialogue between Hamas and the PNA, there has been an unspoken momentary on attacks in the self-rule areas. Such restraint is unlikely to persist.

Instead, the positive atmosphere following the reconciliation talks in Cairo has been replaced by angry recriminations. A Hamas leaflet, circulated in Gaza, blames the killing, laid blame on the Israeli intelligence services, its "network of collaborators", and a weak PNA which "provided the hole in the wall of the Palestinian people through which these services entered".

The consequences are all too predictable. Israeli Police Minister Moshe Shalev said after the killing, "We certainly breathe easier for the fact that Yehya Ayyash is no more." But the question is for how long. In a fax to the Reuters agency in the Gaza Strip, Hamas set the clock ticking: "Let the occupying invaders and their stooges await the response to the Zionist crime," it said.

## Bowing to billions

The long history of respect for human rights and for freedom of expression, in which Britain has always taken such pride, was forced to bow to commercial interests when the British authorities decided to expel the London-based Saudi dissident Mohamed Al-Mas'ari recently.

The Home Secretary clearly stated that the decision was taken after the Saudis had threatened British firms with the loss of billions of pounds sterling in arms contracts consequent to the Yamamah deal concluded in 1985.

"Our government exists to advance and protect the interests of the people of the UK," he said a few days after the decision. "That is what we are there to look after, and that includes the jobs and people of the UK, and that is an entirely legitimate consideration."

The Yamamah deal brings in annual earnings of 2 billion sterling, and guarantees 700,000 jobs.

Prime Minister John Major said that the decision was taken out of concern for Saudi stability. "Mr Al-Mas'ari is an illegal

immigrant, who has used legitimacy in this country to wage a campaign to try to bring down the Saudi regime...The stability of the Gulf is very important. The Saudi Arabian position is fundamental to the stability of the whole Gulf," he said.

Mas'ari, who came to Britain in 1994, has waged a campaign alleging corruption in the Saudi royal family through the London-based Committee for Defence of Legitimate Rights (CDLR).

The Saudi royal family were annoyed by his activities, and appealed to the British authorities to expel him. Britain tried to expel him to Yemen last year, but failed on the grounds that it would not be safe for him. However, this year they chose to expel him to the quiet Caribbean island of Dominica. He was given an ultimatum to appeal against the decision by January 16 or else to appear at Gatwick airport.

However Mas'ari, who is now appealing, said that his expulsion would not stop the CDLR's activities. The expulsion is regarded as a blow to all London-based Arab opposition groups.

Leith Kobba of the Iraqi Islamic Imam Khaswi institution believes that, undoubtedly, the Arab opposition will feel "less secure" and "more worried" about their futures in England. He ascribed this to the fact that Britain, which has been distinguished by its respect for human rights and freedom of expression, is now "shrinking the freedoms it offers to

political dissidents as to this."

"It is obvious that these freedoms, which were as sacred to Britain as religious beliefs are to our (Arab) states, are now controlled by personal interests," he said. He added that the British action would open the door to further British-Arab government agreements to expel Arab opposition groups from London, on the pretext that their presence is likely to jeopardise British relations with these Arab states.

Kobba believes the affair has two dimensions. The first is the expulsion of Mas'ari, because his presence annoys the Saudi government, and, by extension, irritates arms exporters in Britain. The government was therefore forced to expel Mas'ari in an attempt to save British-Saudi arms deals.

The second dimension is the principle of expulsion itself, which has now been set as a precedent in the British government's dealings with the Arab opposition in Britain. "The next step could be the expulsion of a Bahraini opposition group that has recently arrived in England. The Bahraini government is exerting every effort on the British government to expel them. Although Britain has refused in the past, given that it has decided to expel Mas'ari, it could do the same to the Bahraini group and others," he said.

Adel Ahmed Hussein, the head of the Sudanese Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) in the UK, said that the deportation of Mas'ari will put a question mark over the future of the Arab opposition in Britain. "At the end of the day, all depends on the country of origin of the opposition figure or group. If this country has no relations with Britain, there is no problem. But if good relations exist, as soon as UK interests with this state are jeopardised, the opposition will be affected," he commented.

He believes that Mas'ari had got in the way of Saudi-British interests, and the UK would not allow its policy of harbouring opposition groups to jeopardise its relation with any other country.

He added that Home Secretary Michael Howard's statement during his visit to Pakistan was clear: he said that the interests

of the UK came first; when it came to Britain's relations with other countries, he would not allow any person to jeopardise them.

Kamal El-Helbiwi, spokesperson of the banned Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood said that "certainly every opposition group would now reconsider its case and think about its future in Britain. However, he added that the law was not against opposition groups working in Britain; as long as they did not break the law, the authorities would not have any valid reason for ousting them. "Britain will honour its long history of respect for human rights. They gave Mas'ari 10 days to appeal, unlike Abachi (in Nigeria), or the Arab regimes," he said.

He thinks that Britain's decision to expel Mas'ari was due to many pressures of a specific economic nature from Saudi Arabia, and he pinpoints "prejudice" from "some individuals" as well. "They are biased against religion, especially Islam. If they understood the true nature of Islam, there would be no problem with the Islamists or even with the fundamentalists as they call them," he added.

Azzam Sultan of the Freedom for the Muslim World (a British Muslim Forum) said that if the government succeeded in removing Mas'ari, it would be a serious precedent in the authorities' dealings with other asylum seekers. He added that it would also encourage the British government to proceed with amendments to restrict the freedom of political activists.

"The [recent] bill on immigration happens to be part of a policy that has materialised over the past few years to save money and to decrease the number of asylum seekers. It is a clear trend in all of Europe, not only in Britain," he said.

With this case becoming a political issue inside Britain, Sultan predicts that public opinion will be on the side of Mas'ari, and that it will eventually prevent the government from proceeding with any amendments to the freedoms that British people have long taken pride in.

However, the British decision to deport Mas'ari, with the aim of silencing his campaign against the Saudi government, seems to be having the opposite effect. Mas'ari is now becoming a media superstar, and many people who had never previously heard of him, are now keen to follow his activities, even when he moves to the quiet Caribbean island of Dominica.

## Disappointing speculation

Though the new Algerian cabinet includes new Islamist faces, the reshuffle has disappointed some, writes **Amira Howeidy**

Two months after taking office, Algerian President Liamine Zeroual formed his first government on Friday following several days of intense speculation. The minimal changes he made in the reshuffle, however, have disappointed some observers.

The 31-member cabinet includes 13 ministers from the former transitional government, which President Zeroual headed for the last two years. The remaining 18 include only four opposition party figures, three of whom represent the Islamic trend. In the changes, Ahmed Murani, a breakaway founder member of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), has been designated minister of religious affairs; Noureddin Bahbouli from Hamas becomes minister of agriculture and fisheries; and Abdel-Qader Hamito, also a Hamas member, minister of small and medium enterprise.

It is rumoured that several secular opposition leaders had rejected offers offered them, due to prime minister Ouyehia's insistence on including Islamists in the newly formed cabinet.

Though the inclusion of the Islamists is a significant change of policy, for some observers it does not go far enough. They argue that Hamas' two cabinet positions will not provide the group with much political weight. At the same time, Hamas has been accused of furnishing the image of the Islamists in its rush to take posts in the government. Ahmed Murani's inclusion also does not come as a great surprise; he was a member of the Transitional Council after rejecting what he termed the "FIS' policy of violence".

Hamas leader Mahfouz Nehmah, however, argues that the two ministers appointed from his party are "economically and strategically important to the government." The ministry of fisheries, said Nehmah, is responsible for international agreements and regional communications, while the ministry of small and medium enterprise is concerned with the transformation of the state socialist system to a free market economy. Perhaps most importantly for Algeria's young population, this ministry will have to construct an employment policy to provide vocational training and jobs.

Mohesdin Ammour, a prominent Algerian intellectual, told the *Weekly* that the "big promises" which accompanied the presidential elections had triggered hopes for "real change". But, he commented, "the reshuffle did not respond to the hopes of the Algerian people. They wanted to see all sectors of society represented in the cabinet."

Such criticisms aside, President Zeroual confidently announced last Sunday that the primary goals of the new government would be to "fight injustice and pursue a policy of tolerance with extremists." He also plans "economic reform along with social development."

One major challenge facing the government is its preparation for the forthcoming parliamentary elections. The exclusion of much of the opposition from the cabinet reshuffle has left some observers doubtful about how willing the government is to give the opposition a chance at power.

Dialogue with the FIS is expected to continue under Prime Minister Ouyehia. Over the past two years, in his former post as personal assistant to Zeroual, Ouyehia has been negotiating at length with FIS leaders, and he is said not to support the army's cancellation of the 1991 elections and the banning of the FIS.

Ouyehia, who comes from the largely Berber region of Kabaliya, is also expected to open channels of communication with the secularist Front for Socialist Berber followings. Observers argue that these groups will play an important role in the upcoming elections.

This reshuffle seems, however, to have done little to build consensus on Algeria's future, and discontent with solutions presented by the political authorities remains. It is an unease compounded by the killings reported daily in the Algerian press.

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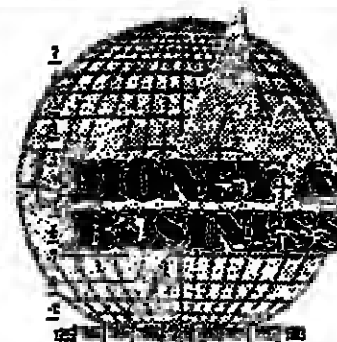
Fax resume to 4189772 within a week.  
C/O Managing Director.



## Saudi oil production to inject US\$25 billion in 1996

REGULAR Saudi petroleum exports are expected to bring in US\$25,185bn of revenues, representing 72 per cent of revenues required by the 1996 balance of the kingdom. The Middle East Economic Survey, distributed in Cyprus, stated that if Saudi Arabia is able to maintain a profit margin of \$11.50 per barrel, the daily exports of 60mn barrels will inject \$25.85bn into the kingdom. The kingdom produces 8mn barrels per day, with a local consumption of 900,000 barrels per day.

# MONEY & BUSINESS



## Limited oil production increase

THE MONTHLY report issued by the Information centre of the council of ministers indicated a limited increase in oil production in the early months of 1995 which reached 151,000 tonnes representing a 3 per cent growth rate over the previous year.

The volume of local consumption of oil reached 20,596 million tonnes which represent half the volume produced in 1995.

The report also showed an upward production trend in 1995 except in August/September.

## NBE records the highest profitability in 1994/1995

THE NATIONAL Bank of Egypt (NBE) has recorded the highest profitability among public sector commercial banks with a surplus available for distribution of LE100mn representing 39.3 per cent of the aggregate surplus of all public sector commercial banks. Besides, total footings as of 30 June 1995 mounted to LE77.2bn of which deposits grip LE35.3bn and loans and investments LE28.3bn.

The sound and outstripping performance was coupled with a tendency towards a more solid capital base and healthier capital adequacy ratios squaring with international standards. NBE's capital and reserves grew by 6 per cent to reach LE1.8bn while provisions increased by 22 per cent to reach LE4.2bn.

In The Banker's Issue of November 1995, NBE came on top of all Egyptian banks and number 11 of the greatest 100 Arab banks.

The bank's success in mobilising savings reflects its sound strategy based on introducing new saving pools tailored to meet the needs of various income brackets and divergent customers.

Moreover, NBE's network of branches (315 branch-

es throughout the country) has played a crucial role in attracting deposits to total LE35.3bn representing 33.7 per cent of total public sector commercial banks.

On the other hand, NBE is the exclusive issuer of the biggest pool in Egypt, namely the savings certificates with its three groups.

Net sales of the said certificates since their first introduction in 1965 to June 1995 totaled some LE17.7bn.

The bank's success in attracting savings has had its positive repercussions on financing different economic sectors, fueling thus loans to total LE28.3bn representing 33.8 per cent of total public sector commercial banks.

NBE sustained its support to the productive sectors by injecting loans to the industrial and agricultural sectors totaling LE6.6bn and LE285mn recording an increase of 12 per cent and 9 per cent respectively against the previous year.

In line with its ambitious strategy oriented towards piecemeal transition to universal banking, the bank embarked upon providing traditional and non-

traditional banking services and wedding the activities of both commercial and investment banks together so as to stand fierce competition envisaged during the coming stage in the framework of trade liberalisation, universal banking, merging and colossal banking entities.

In fact, NBE has already adopted this trend since the beginning of the seventies by extending investment trustee services and providing all proxy activities on behalf of its customers including feasibility studies as well as company incorporation and evaluation. Moreover, NBE holds equity participation in 85 different economic enterprises with a total capital of LE10bn.

In line with its constant endeavours to cope with banking technology, NBE has tilted its activities towards expanding the scope of non-traditional activities, promoting investments, developing the capital market and extending personal banking services.

On the international arena, NBE has assured its presence in the international markets via its wholly-owned National Bank of Egypt, London and its equity

participation in the African American Bank, New York in addition to its representative office in Johannesburg, South Africa and an extensive network comprising 1300 correspondents worldwide.

**MARITIME TRANSPORT COMPANY  
EGYPTIAN NAVIGATION COMPANY  
2, EL NASR STREET, ALEXANDRIA,  
EGYPT**  
**RE-ANNOUNCEMENT FOR SALE OF  
VESSELS BY AUCTION**  
**THE COMPANY RE-ANNOUNCES  
SALE OF THE VESSELS MENTIONED  
HEREAFTER (SEPARATELY)  
LOCATED AT ALEXANDRIA PORT ON  
THE CONDITION THEY ARE AT  
THEIR PRESENT LOCATION**

VESEL'S NAME	AMON	EL AMRIA
TYPE	GENERAL CARGO	GENERAL CARGO
DATE OF BUILD	1978	1973
NAME OF SHIPYARD	ALEXANDRIA YARD (EGYPT)	PORT SAID YARD (EGYPT)
L.O.A	130 M	100.09 M
BREADTH	17.80M	14.60 M
G.R.T.	8232 TONS	4240 TONS
N.R.T.	2801 TONS	2038 TONS
D.W.T.	5890 TONS	3,254 TONS
BASIC PRICE	US\$ 1540000	US\$ 470000
DATE OF AUCTION	25/1/1996	30/1/1996

### TERMS OF AUCTION

- 1- BIDDER HAS TO DEPOSIT THE SUM OF US\$ 50 000 FOR EACH VESSEL
- 2- TAXATION CARD IS COMPULSORY FOR EGYPTIAN BIDDERS.
- 3- TERMS, TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS AND GENERAL CONDITIONS CAN BE OBTAINED FROM THE PURCHASING SECTOR AGAINST US\$ 50 000 FAX. NO. 4831345 - 4831656.
- 4- VISIT AND SURVEYING OF VESSELS ALLOWED DURING WORKING HOURS FROM TODAY UP TO AUCTION DATE.
- 5- AUCTION WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE HEAD OFFICE, 2 EL NASR STREET, ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT AT THE ABOVE MENTIONED DATES AT 12 NOON LOCAL TIME

## Training programme New industrial exhibition

**UNITED Specialists Co.** announced the offering of its comprehensive training programmes for 1996, suited to the needs of different organisations operating in a wide range of fields. These programmes will be held in a number of European and Arab countries, including England, Cyprus, Egypt, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. Both short and long-term programmes will be available, which, according to Mohammed Rida, operations manager of United Experts in the Middle East, will help participants gain knowledge and develop acquired skills.

Programmes such as these assist different organisations and companies in implementing plans to develop their labour force and develop employment structures.

Khalid Attiya, deputy general manager of United Experts in Saudi Arabia, said that the training philosophy relies on assisting companies in defining their training needs and designing programmes to develop and expand employment structures via customised programmes, using the most modern and comprehensive training techniques.

**NABIL HELMI**, manager of Guarantee for Marketing and Development, explained that an exhibition of industrial supplies and equipment will be held for the first time in Egypt, which is intended to serve a wide range of sectors required by the nation in its policy of boosting and raising its services until Egyptian

production standards are able to compete with those in foreign markets.

The idea of the exhibition is new, and will be held at 10 Ramadan City, a literal fortress of industry in Egypt. Because we believe that these services must be offered to the industrial cities. All investors and factory managers are strongly urged to visit the exhibition and enjoy its benefits. So far, 40 major companies are participating in the exhibition, and it is hoped that the number and diversity of companies will increase so that the exhibition's goals can be met. Companies wishing to receive more information about the exhibition can call 2452868/ 4178190 from 9.00am to 8.00pm.

### Business news

#### India demands less trade tariffs

SOUTH Asian nations should lower trade tariffs and work on forming a regional trading bloc, an Indian government minister said Monday.

Commerce Minister P. Chidambaram said the seven members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, should consider identifying goods that would not qualify for lower trade tariffs.

Other goods, he told a meeting of the South Asian commercial ministers, could qualify for lower trade tariffs.

The steps would expand on a move by India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives to offer each other lower tariffs on 226 products as part of the South Asian Preferential Trading Agreement, which came into effect in December.

Chidambaram also said the seven nations of the SAARC should offer each other zero near zero tariffs on trade in primary commodities and remove quantitative restrictions as well. Primary commodities account for 64 per cent of intra-SAARC trade, he said.

But Chidambaram said the group must take further steps to reach its goal of setting up a free trade zone, preferably by the year 2000 but at least by 2005.

#### Canadian trade deals with India

CANADIAN Prime Minister Jean Chretien, premiers of 7 provinces and scores of business leaders embarked Monday on a two-week trade mission to India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia.

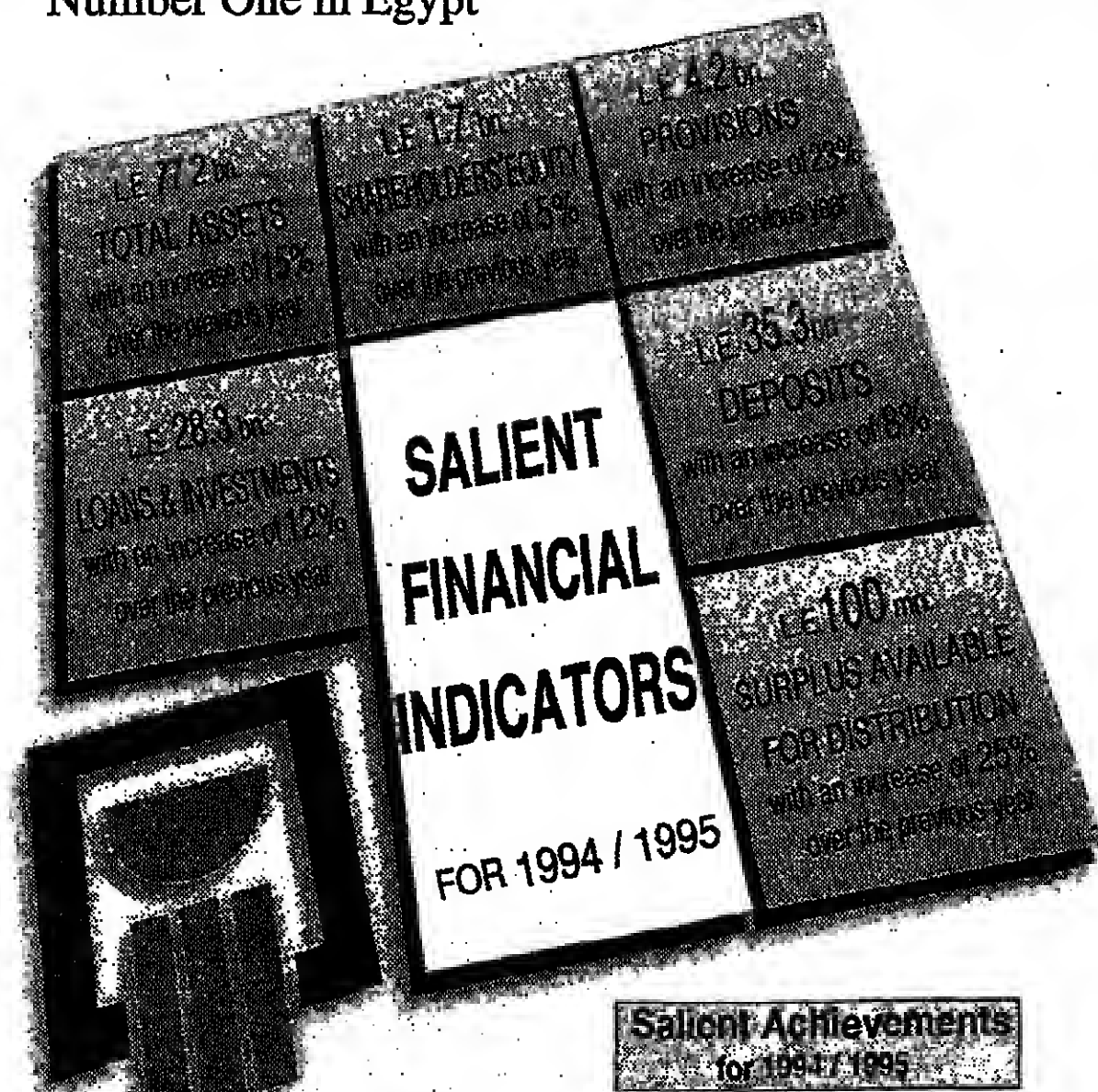
With 308 businesses participating, it is among the largest trade missions ever to visit the region.

Chretien is expected to sign trade deals with companies in Asia worth an estimated US\$1.5bn to Canadian business.

In 1994, Chretien headed a large trade mission to China. Only about 40 per cent of the \$7bn in deals signed in China have led to final contracts so far. Hui federal officials say that is a good success rate, given that it can take years to finalise deals in China.

## NATIONAL BANK OF EGYPT

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- Sponsoring banks' participation in real estate and tourist development.
- Establishing huge projects in cooperation with other financial institutions and offering a portion of their shares to public subscription with a view to stimulating the private sector.
- Supporting the Egyptian exporter domestically and abroad and providing state of the art information technology and financing network.
- Providing private banking for prime customers.
- Linking Cairo branches by a single network.
- Rendering all newly innovated banking products to promote development and growth.

## Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt

The volume of financing provided by Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt since its launch for agriculture related ventures and animal production projects totaled LE 1.5 billion. This financing is channelled towards the purchase of required materials and the construction of the production line. Faisal Islamic Bank is a shareholder in many agriculture and animal production companies. Shares are worth LE 23 million.

Company	Activity
- Islamic Co. for animal production (El Qanater El Khairia)	- Poultry and eggs production
- Fotco - Ismailia National Co. for food processing	- Land reclamation and cultivation, drying, freezing and packaging of vegetables, processing of fruit juices
- El Sharq Al Awsat for land reclamation (Gisr El Suis - Baqtar Sq - Heliopolis)	- Cultivation and reclamation of land - growing poultry, producing fodder and fertilizers
- El Giza Co. for agriculture related industries (Zawia Abu Muslim - Abul Numrus - Giza)	- Dairy products, cultivation and reclamation of lands.



# Le Pen feeds on poverty

Plunging public morale and deepening social unrest permit the French fascists to orchestrate a campaign of terror, writes **Falza Rady**

While on the campaign trail last spring, presidential candidate Jacques Chirac spoke of protecting the poor and defending the welfare programme. At the time, he also vowed to make unemployment the "priority of priorities" and accused those who focused on the budget deficit of "exaggerating". Now, six months later, President Chirac is singing to a different tune.

Having reneged on his prior commitments, Chirac's resolve to slash social security benefits triggered militant strikes that paralysed the country for close to one month. Behind this autumn's wave of strikes is Chirac's determination to reduce the current five per cent budget deficit to three per cent to enable France to qualify for the single European currency in 1999.

Although the strikes seem to be winding down after the railway and metro workers' demands were met, the social crisis is a long way from being resolved. While sociologists refer to an ambient, deep-seated "malaise" and compare this autumn's strikes with the legendary May 1968 labour-student uprising, then student leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit disagreed. Comparing the two struggles, he explained that the '68 generation fought to determine their future, whereas people now protest the loss of their future. Cohn-Bendit's interpretation was almost echoed in *Newsweek*. "Social unrest has yet to reach the furore or revolutionary ardour of May

1968," wrote Marcus Mabry. "After those days of rage, France forged a new social contract. Today's tumult marks the death of that contract."

In effect, governments of the right and left have progressively dismantled the welfare state by adopting neo-liberal economic policies over the past two decades. In France, like elsewhere, the market economy determines a growing social disparity as the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. "Compounded and reproduced social inequalities form a system trapping an increasing number of people, who insidiously lose their rights and their citizen's status," wrote social scientist Alain Bihou.

Statistics indicate that the impoverishment of the working class, in particular, has recently caused an upsurge in racially motivated crimes and increased worker support for the fascist National Front (NF) Party of Jean-Marie Le Pen. While Le Pen's proportional gains at the polls in last May's presidential elections were not significantly up on '88 — 15.07 compared with 14.39 per cent — his social support base has shifted from lower-middle class to working class. In 1988, the professional, small business, artisan and farmer vote pattern showed a proportionally higher tendency than the general population to vote NF. At the time, Le Pen won about one-third of the small entrepreneur and artisan vote. Comparatively, the recent pres-

idential election results do not show any real Le Pen gains among this class, but demonstrate the development of his working class base. Since '88, labour support for the NF leader has increased by 11 per cent and this year, 27 per cent of the workers voted for him. Le Pen even scored ahead of Socialist candidate Lionel Jospin's 21 per cent and far ahead of Communist Robert Hue, who only captured 15 per cent of the labour vote. Moreover, opinion polls indicate that 33 per cent of the socio-economically marginalised and politically disadvantaged favour the NF.

Since Le Pen's meteoric rise to political prominence in the June '84 European elections, his party has been steadily progressing at the polls. Comparisons between the NF and Nazi discourses have by now become standard. Like the historical German and Italian brands of fascism, NF ideology exploits the working class's deep fear of losing their hard-gained livelihood. Moreover, those who are totally destitute are highly visible, their misery palpable. Like elsewhere, thousands of the homeless roam the harsh city streets of France, anxiously on the look-out for the next precarious shelter, the next soup kitchen — desperately surviving. With unemployment rates soaring from three per cent in the early '70s to the current 12 per cent, youth unemployment reaching the 24 per cent level

and close to one million people on the welfare rolls, workers' fears are made tangible.

Le Pen successfully manipulates this anxiety — the fear of being next in line — by targeting alien Arabs and Africans, who allegedly cause unemployment by flooding the market and usurping jobs that should rightfully go to the French. He also blames the foreigners for the decaying moral fabric, the deteriorating infrastructure and the rising crime rate.

By playing on the ultra-nationalist theme of communal solidarity, based on white Judeo-Christian ethics, against the twin threats of "African underdevelopment" and "Islamic terrorism", the NF managed to mobilise a segment of the working class. Deeply disillusioned with the late François Mitterrand's so-called socialist government that institutionalised social inequalities by promoting the "market" economy and tightening social spending — more so than governments of the centre-right — workers became disaffected from the traditional left en masse.

Discredited and unable to offer solutions, the left evidently lost out to the resonance of Le Pen who finds ready-made culprits, promises jobs, vigorously heralds change — while remaining in the opposition. Fascism may loom large in France if the failures of the market economy are not addressed.

## Policing Britain's blacks

The racial riots in the London suburb of Brixton last month caught the headlines. But, stereotyping Britain's blacks as criminal — like some top police officers did — will not do, argues **Herman Ouseley**

Making communities less criminally inclined is a long-term goal, particularly in diverse societies where there is relative poverty and high unemployment. Alternative youth cultures and racism are also prominent features. It is even more so in a city like London which is the most ethnically and culturally diverse capital city in the world.

Sir Paul Condon [Chief of London's Metropolitan Police] called the riots when he declared his hand and went for broke by playing the race and crime card. That is why he refused to back down from his stance of insisting that young black people and street crimes were synonymous. He refused to apologise to anyone at anytime for the force caused by his statements in his operation "Eagle Eye" devised to trap the "runners". It was a clever sting. His first to neutralise the inevitable retaliatory blows.

Not that the retaliation would be that formidable. Most people are decent enough, and law-abiding and want all crimes of violence, including racially motivated violence, and burglaries eliminated. Policing London successfully requires not only good, honest, and clever police officers, but community sensitivity. It is analogous to a marathon: if you sprint too soon you could "burn out" before the finishing line.

Perhaps [London's] Metropolitan Police anticipated the response. Maybe they knew the risks, the likely reactions and felt they were on a winner. After all, there were three key goals. First to get the rank and file police officers to feel good about the new "stop and search" activities. Why were black people being stopped and searched in such ridiculously high proportions compared to white people? Sir Paul's letter provided the answer, the comfort, the confidence, the commitment and the assurances needed.

Secondly, public opinion was needed to reinforce the notion that the police were going to catch the criminals. Hoodlums And, as the public were telling police that street criminals were predominantly black so why chase anyone else? The headlines targeted anyone of colour and drew them into the net of vulnerability. Two null.

Thirdly, it opened up a wider debate about the causes of crime. Unemployment and exclusions from school are just two factors that disproportionately affect black young men. Although this represents a risk of "political correctness" it would be worth taking, because it would provide a chance to engage the black community in meaningful dialogue about the underlying causes and their responsibilities.

If the black community refused to co-operate they would be accused of burying their heads in the sand, refusing to recognise and respond to the facts, and doing nothing to solve increasing criminal tendencies in the black community. In other words, they had to be part of the problem. Game, set and match. Well, almost!

It seems that Sir Paul may have achieved his initial goals but the real prizes are yet to be won. The marathon is not a sprint.

Very few black people who were invited to meet with Sir Paul failed to do so. There was much huffing and puffing but most people either turned up to hear what he had to say or had private briefings and tendered their apologies for not attending the formal meeting on 28 July. That meeting itself was noted most for its media hype. In fact, the whole scenario has provided a boon for the media, and high profile exposure for Sir Paul. It also enabled Bernie Grant MP, notably the black spokesperson on policing matters in London, to lead the challenge on behalf of the law-abiding silent majority of black Londoners.

Bernie Grant, more than anyone else, has maintained consistent public opposition against the Metropolitan Police's demonising of black people as a whole through Sir Paul's initiative — as orchestrated by the mass media.

However, by the end of the day Sir Paul Condon dominated all the headlines and his triumphalist agenda was the one being heralded by virtually all sections of the media.

The wider agenda is very critical. As Aubrey Rose, the Deputy Chair of the Commission of Racial Equality (CRE) said when attending the briefing: "You might arrest and convict 300 people for street crimes — but even if you manage to lock them up there will be more making their places unless we sort out the deep-seated underlying problems."

What is being done to make parenting an issue in the curriculum? What support programmes are available in schools — especially primary schools to assist those children labelled as "difficult", "withdrawn" or "aggressive"? These children often come from high-rise low-income housing blocks, experiencing a combination of domestic violence, poverty, unemployment, abuse, social deprivation, few positive male role models, low self-esteem, and racism.

They come from both white and black homes, but racism affects black boys in particular who are excluded from schools at four times the rate of white boys, and are three times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police than white boys. That vulnerability affects them persistently, so much so, that in London more than six out of every ten black males aged 16-24 are out of work.

Racism sadly remains an issue in both education and policing. Ask any of the community organisations that work on exclusions from school. The number of racial discrimination complaints against the police is another indicator of the problem that the Metropolitan Police still has to come to terms with.

What is clearly emerging is that the wider agenda, cleverly initiated by Sir Paul Condon, is the most important aspect of tackling crime in London and elsewhere. The community, including black people, are fed up with all sort of crimes and want them reduced. There is support for the police in tackling crime. But, there would be considerably more support for the police if they were to demonstrate their intention to be fair and not criminalise the innocent or stereotype groups of people.

There has been no attempt to criminalise white people because they are disproportionately involved in child pornography, sexual crimes, homicides, burglaries and serious fraud. Nor should there be such an attempt. Was it not Sir Paul Condon who said he was not interested in skin colour?

Indeed, the Metropolitan Police would appear to have scored an own goal by failing to utilise positively, the excellent role models among black police officers in London.

We need to see many black people, especially black men, in their true light as making positive, law-abiding contributions to the social, cultural and economic well-being of Britain. The monitoring and role model projects proposed will accentuate the positive views and actions among our young people of all backgrounds and, hopefully, isolate the negative minority from the rest.

It will be a long haul and right now the winning time still seems a long way ahead. But if we work together, sustaining and supporting each other with mutual respect and understanding, we will all be the winners.

The writer is chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality in Britain.



British policemen guard a Brixton street in south London, 14 December, during violence and looting which left 10 people injured including three members of the police. The unrest followed the peaceful demonstration against the death in custody of Wayne Douglas — a black Briton. The riots in Brixton in 1995 were far less violent than those that took place a decade ago, but they did point to the discontent of a large section of Britons of African descent who feel marginalised and oppressed (photos: AFP and AP)

## Time for change

America desperately needs a change in its black-white relations. **David Du Bois** explains why a former chair of the Congressional Black Caucus may be just that

The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) is the premier civil rights organisation in the United States, at least for those who identify civil rights with the rights, civil and human, of African Americans. That is why the recent appointment of Kwesi Mfume, former chair of the Congressional Black Caucus and Maryland representative in Congress, as executive director of the NAACP is an important development.

The NAACP was the idea of a group of liberal whites following a particularly gruesome lynching in 1909 of a black man in Springfield, Illinois, the longtime residence of Abraham Lincoln. Earlier, in 1905, W E B Du Bois, a then young, black scholar, had formed a protest body, the Niagara Movement, with a group of northern African Americans. Du Bois had achieved notable attention in academia as a result of a 10-year cycle of studies of the African American at a small, black college in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1909 the Niagara Movement was invited to merge with a New York group of whites at its organising conference to establish a permanent body dedicated to the advancement of coloured people.

Some leaders of the Niagara Movement, suspicious of white leadership, refused to agree to such a merger. However, Du Bois, seeing this association as broadening and strengthening the black struggle, agreed to be one of the five founding members and managed to persuade most of the membership of the Niagara Movement to go in with him. This early expression of differences between black leaders regarding the role of white liberals in the black struggle has characterised the black movement throughout its history. Its dramatic expression during the 1960s civil rights struggles in the south caused consternation, frustration and finally rejection by many white liberals unwilling to accept black leadership of their efforts in the interest of African Americans. Kwesi Mfume, entering the board of the NAACP as executive director at this time, could force this issue to the fore in the NAACP.

The NAACP has operating branches in every major city or town and many small towns across the nation. Up to the 1960s civil rights movement, it was the membership dues and dime, quarter and one dollar donations of ordinary black folk that sustained the organisation. Local NAACP branches and leaders, sometimes to

the consternation of the national office, were always a force in the turbulent civil rights battles of the 1960s. However, the white backlash that characterised the decades of the 1970s and '80s — what Stephen Steinberg calls the "white ethnic renaissance" in his important book *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America* — compelled the organisation to depend on financial help from outside the black community.

Thus began a period of political retreat together with top-level, mismanagement, shockingly poor judgement and internal sexist harassment culminating in the acquisition of a \$4.5 million debt, partly the result of lavish spending on personal perks by the chairman of the board and the executive director. This came to light through the efforts of the widely known and respected black columnist and political writer, Carl Rowan, early in 1994 and shocked, angered and saddened the black community.

The removal of Executive Director Rev. Benjamin Chavis Jr, after less than one year in that post, followed. Not satisfied, a rank-and-file membership rebellion, unprecedented in NAACP history, also demanded replacement of Chairman of the Board William Gib-

son. In his place Myrtle Evers-Williams, widow of NAACP activist Medgar Evers, who was murdered by white racist southerners during the civil rights struggles of the 1960s, was elected as chairman of the board in May this year.

Myrtle Evers-Williams has brought to the post a model of life and leadership in the post-civil rights era. As the former commissioner of the Board of Public Works for the city of Los Angeles, she administered an annual budget of nearly a billion dollars. Her administrative experience is vast and untarnished. Her commitment has never been questioned. For many, her support for the appointment of Kwesi Mfume confirms her determination to clean house and revamp an NAACP leadership to make it responsive to the needs of its membership and the black community. They face a daunting task, with the massive debt and the sullied leadership image.

One of the first "accomplishments" of the Gingrich-led Republican congressional majority on assuming power was to drastically reduce congressional financial and operational support for the Congressional Black Caucus, the body that brings together all the black members of the Congress. At

the time, Kwesi Mfume was concluding his tenure as chairman of the caucus. During that tenure and on the House floor, Kwesi Mfume had revealed himself to be intelligent, very articulate, uncompromising on principle, politically savvy, untiring, consistent, unafraid, at once independent and as caucus chairman, a builder of consensus.

In a courageous demonstration of leadership in the face of a growing white backlash nationally to the random destruction, looting and death in Los Angeles and other cities that followed the acquittal in the Rodney King police brutality case, it was Kwesi Mfume, in his capacity as chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, who initiated and hosted a black leadership unity meeting to formulate strategy. Participants included Maxine Waters, member of Congress representing South Central Los Angeles political stalwart and civil rights veteran Rev. Jesse Jackson, the controversial Minister Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam and the then newly appointed executive director of the NAACP, Ben Chavis.

Blacks are hopeful that the

new leadership of the NAACP will provide the kind of direction to the organisation that is needed in what many feel is a time of crisis for blacks in America. The leadership of the "Republican revolution" in Congress has already made clear its intentions regarding black America: end affirmative action, reverse redistricting to increase black and minority representation in government, implement severe cutbacks and restrictions in welfare, increase the cost of health care and care of the elderly and increase law enforcement powers and incarceration. It remains for the Democratic Party to provide a viable alternative that speaks to the needs of black Americans.

Since the days of Franklin D Roosevelt the NAACP has consistently placed its weight and its influence behind the Democratic Party and black voters have overwhelmingly followed suit. Under present conditions and with the new leadership of the organisation, together with the new mood of unity, commitment and responsibility demonstrated by the Million Man March, the coming period in black-white relations in America may prove to be transforming.

Edited by **Gamal Nkrumah**



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## Anti-terrorism bill revisited

By James Zogby

For the third time in as many years, the effort to pass an anti-terrorism bill has stalled in Congress. A broad coalition of legal, ethnic and religious organisations have come together to oppose this legislation. Their opposition is based on the fear that the proposed bill will violate a wide range of civil liberties guaranteed by the US Constitution, and will provide for the potentially abusive expansion of law enforcement.

The 1995 version of the anti-terrorism legislation was initially introduced by the Clinton administration as part of its efforts to counter what they described as domestic US support for foreign terrorist activities. The administration's bill included proposals to ban all US fund raising for groups defined by the president as "terrorist", deny visas to individuals identified with any such "terrorist" group, and allow for the use of secret evidence in extradition trials of individuals accused of membership in those organisations.

It was initially assumed that the administration's proposal would be accepted by the Republican-led Senate and Congress. Opponents of the bill, including Arab Americans, lobbied hard, receiving significant media attention for their complaint that the measures would violate constitutional protections. American-Jewish groups, on the other hand, lobbied equally hard in favour of the bill, arguing that it was necessary to stop terrorism, specifically Islamic and Arabic terrorism, from finding support in the US.

But the bill had lost momentum until the 19 April bombing in Oklahoma City added new urgency to the legislation and new cause for the administration and Congress to seek an expansion of law enforcement authority, even beyond the provisions in the original bill enhancing the power of law enforcement agencies to conduct wiretaps and investigations into the activities of "suspicious groups" and reducing the criteria needed to begin such an investigation.

Given the national trauma in the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing, it was assumed that the expanded bill would easily pass both houses of Congress. But it was at this time that the civil liberties lobby that traditionally influenced liberal members of Congress found new and unexpected allies among conservatives. Angered by the behaviour of federal law enforcement agencies in two recent incidents, conservatives were wary of taking steps to expand the role of the government into the private affairs of citizens.

Public hearings were called in Congress to examine the role of law enforcement agencies at both Ruby Ridge, Idaho, where federal officers, in what some saw as an unprovoked attack, killed the wife and son of a right-wing extremist; and the tragic events outside of Waco, Texas, where law enforcement agencies were once again criticised for the role they played in the deaths of scores of followers of the cult leader David Koresh.

As a result of this new concern among conservatives, the coalition opposing the anti-terrorism legislation grew. To the organisational muscle of the liberal civil liberties groups was added the apparatus of such powerful conservative organisations as the National Rifle Association, Gun Owners of America, and the Law Enforcement Alliance of America.

The Senate ultimately did pass the bill, but with some significant modifications. While some civil liberties groups were not satisfied with the Senate version, the revised bill did provide some additional protections not found in the original.

It was in the House of Representatives that the bill stalled. A group of 50 conservative Republicans balked at the legislation and refused to accept either the administration's or the Senate's revised version. Even when a compromise was proposed, which would have deleted the enhanced wiretap provisions, deleted funding for additional FBI personnel, deleted the provision to allow military involvement in civilian law enforcement and deleted the overly broad definition of terrorism, the conservative alliance still refused to support it. Thus, a coalition of liberals and conservatives in Congress ended the possibility of passing an anti-terrorism bill in 1995.

The Republican leadership in Congress and the Democratic administration are both pledging to renew their efforts to secure the passage of an anti-terrorism bill in 1996. Both sides fear that the failure to pass such a bill will be used as a campaign issue.

But while "anti-terrorism" remains an emotional issue, it has not dissuaded both liberals and conservatives participating in the coalition from insisting that any legislation be precise, and not allow law enforcement agencies to overstep their bounds.

During a recent press conference sponsored by the American Civil Liberties Union (the group that has led the effort against the anti-terrorism legislation), I made clear our community's continuing opposition to the legislation.

I based my case on a number of issues. First, the legislation is not necessary. In fact, to listen to the national outcry about terrorism in the US, one might conclude that the problem was of epidemic proportion. The FBI's own statistics prove the contrary to be true. During the 1970s, there were dozens of domestic acts of terrorism committed each year. Even in the early 1980s, when the FBI began to officially publish annual reports on domestic terrorism, the number of incidents averaged roughly 20 per year. In the past few years the number has been reduced to an average of three or four.

It is also significant to note that the major source of such domestic terrorism is not from Arab or Muslim groups, as has been widely projected in the media. In fact, by the FBI's own count, since 1982, there have been approximately 175 incidents of domestic terrorism overall. Of that number, 77 have been committed by Puerto Rican nationalist groups, 23 by left wing groups, and 12 by anti-Castro Cuban organisations. Eighteen acts were committed by what the FBI termed "Jewish extremists" and 31 by animal rights and environmental groups. By contrast, in the past 14 years there have been only three domestic terrorism incidents attributed to Arabs or Muslims.

Even a look at the State Department reports on anti-US terrorist acts committed abroad shows that those originating in the Middle East by Arab or Islamic people are among the fewest. For example, in 1994, 44 anti-US terrorist acts occurred in Latin America, compared to 8 in the Middle East; in 1993 the numbers were 68 in Latin America and 8 in the Middle East.

Terrorism is an evil and it must be stopped. But it appears that US law enforcement agencies already have the power to do the job and they are succeeding. In fact, the testimony of law enforcement experts was unanimous in stating that, as horrific as the Oklahoma City and World Trade Centre bombings were, there is nothing in, even the most extreme versions of the proposed legislation that would have stopped either of these two hideous acts before they occurred.

In the case of the group around Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, one must remember that the FBI did, in fact, have that group under surveillance and even had informants operating in its midst. The informant was the government's star witness in the case against Abdel-Rahman, but neither he nor the FBI was able to stop the crime before it occurred.

The World Trade Centre case notwithstanding, to make Arabs and Muslims the targets of this legislation, as some American-Jewish groups and members of Congress have done, is plainly wrong and not justified by the facts.

Our concern, therefore, is that existing standards should not be expanded to allow more intrusive activity by law enforcement. The coalition that formed to oppose the anti-terrorism legislation remains committed to fighting efforts to further erode rights that are guaranteed in the constitution to everyone residing in the US.

For three years we have succeeded in surviving off such efforts, but our resolve will be tested once more in 1996.

The writer is president of the Washington-based Arab American Institute.



Fighting between rival militias of the United Liberation Movement (ULIMO) erupted this week around Tubmanburg, 60 km away from the Liberian capital Monrovia. The UN estimates more than 150,000 Liberians have been killed in the civil war. The Liberian civil war is one of 20 conflicts around the world where the UN is involved in peacemaking efforts (photo:AP)

## Up against heavy odds

Gamal Nkrumah listened to UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali at a seminar organised by the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies on what gives definition to the world body under his leadership

A young-looking septuagenarian, the United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Ghali looked indefatigable steering round-table discussions next to an equally purposeful Abdel-Moneim Said, director of the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies. Ghali was understandably protective of the world body. "The UN has no separate entity or will apart from those of the 185 member states that make up the world body. There is no new world order yet. It is up to member states to collectively agree on launching a new world order," he said.

In their 1996 report, Human Rights Watch described Boutros Ghali as the "humble servant of 185 masters who cannot mask [his] abdication of leadership in the human rights realm". He brushes aside such criticism. "We need to view this in the context of steady effort," the secretary-general said. Is it not conviction and courage, rather than servility and indecision, that have carried him beyond the constraints of most mortals' expectations? At the seminar, one glimpsed something of the steely resolve that has carried him to the top.

He made no bones about the fact that the UN suffers a crisis of credibility. Long-time detractors of the UN secretary-general looked on with undisguised glee as the UN failed miserably to usher in peace in the Balkans, virtually vacating the arena to be a hasty retreat and allow the American-led North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) to dictate the terms of peace. "The role of the secretary-general is to implement the decisions of the Security Council," the secretary-general said.

The mid-1990s are a time to look forward to change. Boutros Ghali looked as likely a candidate as any to break the impasse over how to go about changing the world for the better. Ghali was unyielding in his insistence that there is increased interest in social problems among the UN member states.

In spite of bureaucratic and financial constraints, the UN is coordinating a comprehensive strategy for social and environmental development. The UN secretary-general made reference to the Rio de Janeiro, Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing conferences and the forthcoming Habitat II Conference in Istanbul.

The democratisation of international relations is not on offer. Five decades ago, when the UN was founded, decolonisation was not on the cards. Today we have narco-terrorism, religious terrorism, the mafia, and the state is threatened from within," he said. "I believe, above all, that the UN must be a think-tank to try to prepare solutions for the problems of tomorrow. Because

of globalisation, we will be confronted by new problems. Who was aware of the environment 20 years ago? Who was aware of transnational crime?" he queried the participants.

The Vienna-based UN Fund for Drug Abuse Control and the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch are engaged in a number of projects worldwide ranging from the prevention and control of money laundering to fighting organised crime and improving the operational instruments for combating international crime as well as resolving drug-related social problems. The UN also provides technical assistance to member states upon request in order to promote criminal and legislative reform.

The UN International Drug Control Programme works closely with the Centre for Human Rights. Big powers have increasingly used the human rights issue to withhold aid. Human rights have become a most contentious issue in international relations, Ghali noted. In what sounded like a well-rehearsed and thoughtful lecture, Ghali urged the Third World to stay the course with democracy — egged on by economic liberalisation. One detected something of the determination to reform and restructure not just the UN, but the world which has assured his own place in history.

There are currently 70,000 UN peacekeepers in the field. "Every conflict has its own peculiarities," the secretary-general said. "We can never learn from past conflicts, because every conflict is unique," he explained.

"The most important aspect of conflict resolution is the warring parties' political will to stop the conflict," he said. "Without the political will to resolve a conflict, all our peacekeeping efforts are in vain," he stressed. "In Angola, there was the political will to resolve Africa's longest running civil war. Opposition leader [Jonas] Savimbi and President [Edouard] Dos Santos of Angola wanted to end the conflict," he said. "In Somalia, 11 different 'governments' exist side by side. And in Cambodia there were two rival governments, yet when there was a political will there was a way to resolve the conflict there," Ghali pointed out.

Ghali called for a reassessment of certain big powers' non-committal policy towards the UN. He had America, Germany and Japan in mind. Ghali was working to pull the world together be-

hind a powerful UN, he assured his listeners.

The US tops the peacekeeping debts list and owes \$1.4 billion to the UN — more than 40 per cent of the total bill for outstanding contributions. There is a crisis of confidence concerning the UN. The world body has incurred \$3,330 million in debts. "We still have not been able to solve our financial crisis. The member states owe us around \$2.6 billion. They owe in addition approximately \$1 billion for the UN operations in the former Yugoslavia," Ghali said.

Ghali quoted Ghana's President Jerry John Rawlings as saying that the world spends \$5 million per day in the former Yugoslavia, while it can only spare \$25 million a year in Liberia. The secretary-general explained that the war in Liberia is as vicious as the war in the Balkans. He said that part of his mission was to draw attention to what he termed the "orphan situations" in places like Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

Was there a surprise there? No. Despite some feebly floating rumours to the contrary, he was doing his best to publicise the plight of people from war-torn nations, he assured his listeners. The UN had been outmanoeuvred in the Balkans, just as the US had been humbled in Somalia. There was the tense standoff with the Somali warlords and the death of the 18 American Rangers at the hands of General Mohamed Aidi's militia.

The chance to practice the necessary diplomatic arts of compromise and conciliation was missed in Somalia. But Ghali stuck to his plans for averting another disaster in Africa. This week, he dispatched the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, to Burundi to lobby for peace and alleviate political tensions. "To ease ethnic and political tensions costs money and nobody is prepared to pay the necessary amount to have a UN presence on the ground," he reiterated.

"The UN is dealing with member states. Iraq is a member state of this organisation [the UN]. My role is limited to implementation in accordance with a mandate given to me by the Security Council. My role is limited to implementing Resolution 986 (1995) — food for oil — and my contact with the Iraqis is limited to obtaining a way to implement this resolution," the secretary-general said. "May I also mention

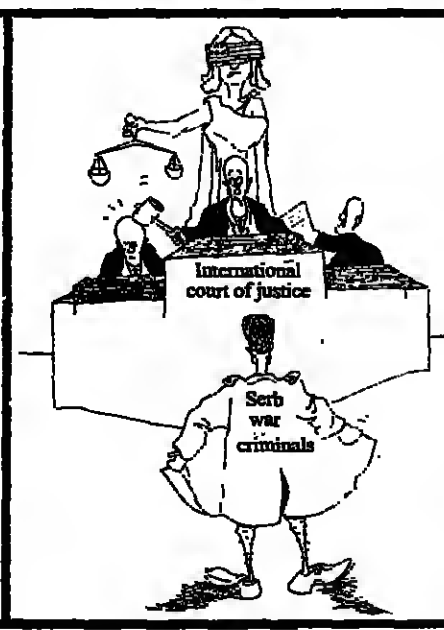
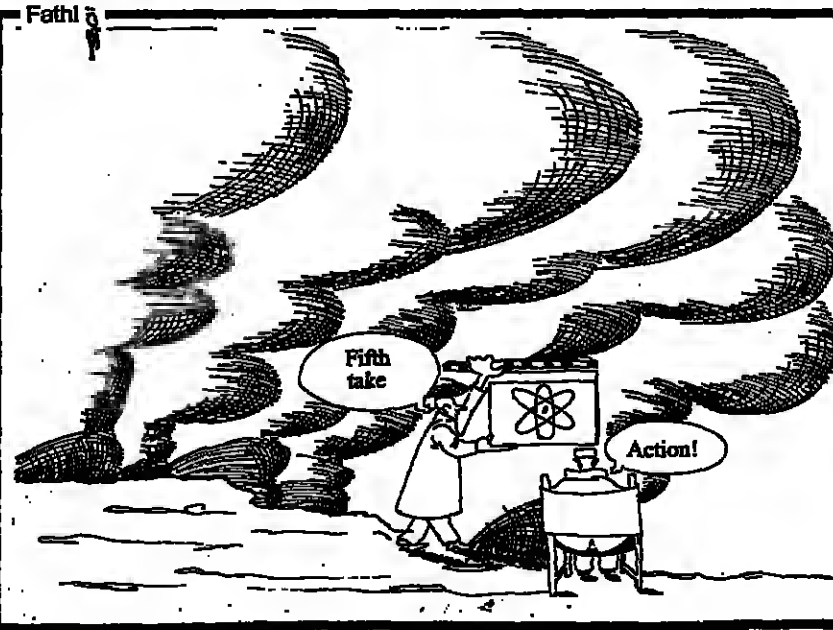
something else which is important?" he asked. "It is that we have created an organ in Geneva which is to give an indemnity to three or four million workers from India, from Pakistan, from the Philippines, from Kuwait, from Jordan, from Egypt. They lost their jobs during the Gulf War; they lost their personal belongings," Ghali emphasised.

"This Compensation Commission has no money. In the case that Resolution 986 (1995) is implemented, 30 per cent of the revenue from the oil will be given to this Commission, and we will be able to offer compensation to the thousands of workers all over the Third World," he stressed.

"So it is not altruistic. Certainly my number one priority is that the people of Iraq are suffering. But there is a second very important element: we need money to be able to pay compensation to the millions of workers who have lost their jobs and who lost many things during the Iraq-Kuwait war," he explained. "America no longer controls the dollar — the world market does. The authority of the nation-state will diminish in the next few years," Ghali predicted. But, we live in a world where the authoritarian pulse of America still beats in the arena of international relations, he intimated. According to Boutros Ghali, the UN is not ignoring the Third World's entreaties for attention. "African leaders feel marginalised; the perception is a very negative one: that nobody is paying attention to Africa anymore," he explained. His recent tour of West Africa was partly to dispel this negative perception, he said.

Small wonder the UN Department of Information has embarked on using radio and television as cost-effective media tools of its global outreach activities. "Currently, 29 programmes in 15 languages are being sent to broadcasters worldwide," he said. The secretary-general's Blue Books Series on peacekeeping, peace-making and development issues are a new activity of the department that has left the indelible mark of Boutros Ghali on the UN.

"The World Bank now looks into my suggestions of the different country categorisations," Ghali noted. "I impressed upon World Bank officials that the world is not divided just into developed and developing countries, but war-torn countries are a special classification unto themselves," he added. "I still have 12, or let us say 11, months," he said. "To be a civil servant is to be trained that nobody will say, 'Thank you'. We are doing our job," he said. It is better to be blinded by Blue Books than hoodwinked by Blue Helmets.



## French labour pains

It appears that there has been a revival of social struggles in France. What is involved exactly?

Aguillon: There has, indeed, been a revival of struggles. They have now been going on for more than a year, since the first strikes took place before the election of President Jacques Chirac.

These struggles have several origins: a wish to recover the purchasing power eroded by the crisis of these last few years (the strike at the Alstom industrial equipment company which manufactured cars for Citroën); a wish to protect public services threatened by the European Union's liberalisation drive (France Telecom, the railways and electricity all face privatisation efforts); and a wish to protect social welfare in general including pensions, health and unemployment insurance.

In all these cases there is resistance to the policies that Paris, as well as Brussels, have adopted to deal with the crisis.

Is there united action among the different labour federations?

Harris: For several years, there was no united action. But the announcement

made by the Juppé government to freeze the salaries of civil servants served as a catalyst for a general union strike on 10 October 1995.

The numbers of strikers even surpassed, in certain sectors, those seen in [the student-worker strikes of] 1968.

Unfortunately, the larger union confederations were again divided on the follow-up to 10 October. Some wanted to negotiate wage increases in return for concessions made by workers in changes to working hours. Others hoped to obtain these increases without yielding anything in return.

Is there a link between the movement for the marginalised and the workers' movement?

Aguillon: One of the most important events of these last few years has been the appearance of the movement for the marginalised. Associations for the unemployed have been strengthened, especially concerning the burning question of housing. There are several hundred thousand people in France who no longer have a home or are on the way to losing

them. Two associations, the *Droit au logement* (Right to Housing) and the *Comité des sans-logis* (Homeless Committee), have been created and become renowned for requisitioning empty apartment blocks.

Relations with the workers movement did not come about spontaneously. The crisis has lasted 20 years, unemployment has become a permanent feature and the new jobs created are precarious ones — short-term contracts or part-time work. The unions primarily organise workers with secure status who work in large companies. These peoples' preoccupations are not identical to those of the long-term unemployed or of people in transit from one "minor job" to another.

A movement was created to bring together the struggles of the unemployed and the marginalised and those of the workers. "Act together against unemployment" groups together the trade unions and the associations for the unemployed and the marginalised to fight against unemployment. The movement battles, in particular, for the reduction of working hours.

Christopher Aguillon, an official in the Solidarité Unité Démocratie-Poste Télécom Télégramme (SUD-PTT) union, and Marianne Harris, a local union militant in the Confédération Fédérale Démocratique des Travailleurs (CFDT), talk to Hosni Abdel-Rehim about the power of the unions to effect change

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### Autonomy and anathema

A potential pitfall in any series of negotiations, such as those between the PNA and Israel that have led to the establishment of the self-rule areas, is that one side may misunderstand the other's tacit, or not so tacit, intentions. For example, in seeking to put into effect the autonomy granted the Palestinians following the Oslo II talks, Arafat may have deemed it his responsibility to ensure the security of those residing in the self-rule areas. He may even have gone so far as to listen carefully when Israel made its continued withdrawal from the Occupied Territories conditional on how well he shoulders this security burden.

Therefore, it probably came as an unwelcome surprise to the Palestinian leader when Hamas activist Yehya Ayyash was killed by an exploding mobile phone last Friday. The assassination of Ayyash, also known as "the Engineer", understandably prompted a wave of protest from Hamas supporters and other Palestinians. The aftermaths of the killing, however, have gone beyond the chanting of slogans and screams of bloody murder. For Arafat, the repercussions will be dire, especially at a time when he is struggling to maintain a tenuous balance between rejectionist Palestinians and those who favour peace. Hamas leaders, who are opposed to, and are boycotting the elections, have blamed Arafat for failing to stay Israel's hand.

While Israeli officials have so far refused to accept responsibility for the assassination, Israeli newspapers have confirmed that Shin Beit had its hand on the trigger that Peres ordered be pulled. Official denials aside, the damage is done. The five-month long stay in hostilities initiated by Hamas from the self-rule areas is sure now to come to an end. This will be a major setback for Arafat as he tries to guide the Palestinians through their first democratic elections. And for peace between Israel and Syria, it could pose a major stumbling block.

Showing little regret for the slaying of "the Engineer", Israel's Police Minister Moshe Shalev, quoted a passage from the Bible: "He who lives by the sword, dies by the sword." True perhaps, but by killing Ayyash how many other deaths have been engineered?

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# The morphology of pan-Arabism

Mohamed Sid-Ahmed discusses whether pan-Arabism can survive without serious reconsideration of the foundations on which it is built

Althusser, the most famous French Marxist philosopher in the sixties, was the first to come forward with what, to my mind, was the breakthrough discovery that Marx had been not one, but multiple. There was the young Marx imbued with Hegelianism, then the mature Marx of *Das Kapital*, finally the elderly Marx. But most people who have embraced Marxist ideology tend to perceive him as an indivisible whole and disregard his evolution as a thinker.

Over the years, many schools of thought have attributed themselves to Marxism, then to Marxism-Leninism. When ideological conflicts erupted between them, each would invoke quotations from Marx to rebut the arguments of other Marxist schools. But such a procedure was based on the assumption that Marx's thinking always remained consistent towards itself and never changed, which, of course, was not true. And this is where Althusser's discovery proved to be so pertinent.

Actually, Althusser's approach did not apply to Marxism only, but to all ideological edifices that are used to justify a given line of political activism. What applies to Marxism applies just as much to the ideology of pan-Arabism. Indeed, various pan-Arabist schools, particularly the Baath, have done much to idealise pan-Arabism and to endow it with inviolability over space and time: "From the Ocean to the Gulf", "From the beginning (azal) to the end (abad) of time." But pan-Arabism, like all

other frames of thinking, has had its ups and downs, and Arabs cannot proceed from the premise that it should always be marked by invariance, whatever the circumstances.

The pan-Arab idea is predicated on the notion that there exists an Arab Nation with specificities of its own, and that the Arabs' allegiance to that Nation transcends whatever other allegiances they may have, whether to smaller entities, such as loyalty to a given Arab state, or to a larger entity, such as an Islamic Nation. Pan-Arabism does not distinguish between Arabs on the basis of religion, ethnicity, nationality or otherwise.

The idea of the Arab Nation was devised by the founders of pan-Arab ideology from the idea of the nation-state in Europe. They introduced it to fill the vacuum created by the breakdown of the Ottoman Caliphate in Istanbul, and to protect minorities in the Arab world from new forms of discrimination. It was no accident that pan-Arab ideology first emerged in the Levant, a mountainous region where many Arab minorities sought refuge over the centuries.

The concept went through many stages. First came the theoretical stage, in which the new idea was preached as a substitute for a post-Caliphate Islamic Nation at a time At-

taturk's takeover of power in Turkey in the aftermath of World War I had deprived it of a centre of gravity. The advocates of an Arab Nation took Garibaldi's unification of the Italian nation and Bismarck's of the German nation as models to be followed.

Then came the second stage of practical implementation in the wake of World War II, when two events, namely, the creation of the state of Israel and the anti-colonial struggle, gave pan-Arab solidarity new impetus, first, to stand up to the fragmentation of Arab land by a variety of colonial powers (Great Britain, France, Italy) and, second, to the usurpation of Arab Palestine by the Zionists. The latter issue addressed the very existence of a pan-Arab entity, not the determination of its boundaries.

This second stage came to a sudden halt with the '67 defeat and the passing of Security Council resolution 242, which called for "the elimination of the consequences of the aggression" — not for the elimination of the state of Israel — and the exchange of the Golan Heights for West Bank and Gaza for Israel. This began a third stage, where pan-Arabism could no longer cling to its previous uncompromising and absolute character if it hoped to cope with a whole new

political rationale without exposing itself to the danger of total collapse. Some have tried to circumvent this conceptual impasse by describing the ongoing peace process as only a temporary arrangement to be reconsidered as and when objective conditions permit.

But if it is true that the projected settlement will never be able to satisfy all the opponents of peace in the region, including in Israel, it is also true that a definitive settlement need not entail the total uprooting of the state of Israel. One can consider the possibility, if only as a theoretical assumption, of an Israel whose presence in the region is more beneficial to its Arab environment than its absence. But the conditions that pan-Arab nationalism will have to formulate to impose on Israel this accommodation with its environment are still to be discovered, failing which pan-Arabism is threatened with the danger of collapsing as an ideology in the face of a resurgent pan-Islamism.

The de-absolutisation of pan-Arabism should not deprive the Arabs of the links and affinities they have succeeded in establishing over the ages in the name of pan-Arabism. But they should also be aware of the vulnerabilities of pan-Arab ideology. After all, the Arab Nation is not the

product of an economic infrastructure, a common market, as is the case of the European nations, but, rather, of a common language which, because of a sacred text, the Qur'an, has survived over the centuries to produce the essence of what is known as Arab civilisation. It is no accident that Israel has resorted to the idea of a Middle East market as its main tool to undermine pan-Arabism, because it knows that the economic dimension is its most vulnerable point. This year, on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of Herzl's book, *The Jewish State*, Israel plans to discuss means of updating Zionism in line with the new conditions of peace in the region. This confronts the Arabs with the need to update pan-Arabism as a condition for its survival.

In this connection, it is interesting to question whether any specific meaning should be given to the fact that Egypt's new prime minister, who served as minister for planning for over a decade, is now called upon to remove the obstacles impeding privatisation, the very antithesis of planning. It is also interesting to note that the notion of planning is closely linked to Nasser's (pan-Arab) approach to politics. Is this no more than a coincidence at a time the government is in search of an ideology that is neither unbridled liberalism serving Israel's "Middle East market" approach, nor Islamic fundamentalism that is adopted by a variety of terrorist groups throughout the region?

## Oceanic opportunities

The proposed Indian Ocean Community holds opportunities that Egypt cannot afford to miss, argues Mohamed El-Sayed Selim

The end of the Cold War has irrevocably altered the shape of international relations, and one of the most noticeable changes has been the tendency of those countries sharing oceans and seas to embark upon regional collaboration projects. The purpose is to exploit oceanic resources jointly, to work to control pollution and to combat various forms of crime, such as piracy and drug-trafficking. Examples include the Black Sea Organisation, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the Mediterranean Forum, and the Euro-Mediterranean Initiative, all being instances of this new form of international cooperation.

Last month I was invited by the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust (IGMT) to attend a conference devoted to the idea of establishing an Indian Ocean Community (IOC). I was not surprised to learn that India, in collaboration with other major Indian Ocean countries, is trying to establish such a community, since this fits the pattern that I have described very well. What really astonished me was the amount of progress that had been achieved in just one year (1995) to develop the proposal and to turn it into a reality. I was also favorably impressed by the quantity of effort that had been put into thinking through the concept of an IOC: in Australia an Indian Ocean Centre has been established, and in India a journal, the *Journal of Indian Ocean Studies* founded, to name but two examples. The IGMT conference was attended by representatives of most Indian Ocean states. The fact that an Egyptian representative was also invited indicates that these states consider Egypt to be a partner in this project.

The notion of an IOC developed over the last five years, mainly at the academic and business levels. The first formal meeting to discuss

the idea was held in Mauritius in March 1995 at the initiative of seven core countries, namely Australia, India, Kenya, South Africa, Mauritius, Oman and Singapore. Another meeting was held in June of the same year in Perth, Australia, and at both meetings government representatives, academics, and businessmen met in their individual capacities to discuss the various aspects of the planned cooperation. The third meeting in the series was held again in Mauritius in August, 1995. At this meeting, discussions were held to prepare a Charter for an Indian Ocean Regional Economic Association, and India was entrusted with the task of drawing up its provisions. An Indian Ocean Regional Academic Group was also established with a view to promoting links between the academic institutions of the region. The New Delhi meeting of December 1995 represents the fourth in the series.

So what were the main issues that this meeting convened to discuss? Perhaps the main topic for debate was the geographical spread of the Indian Ocean region. Whereas the Indian and South African delegates advocated a wider geographical definition, which would include all those countries which had shores onto the Indian Ocean, together with states in the hinterland that use ports onto the sea, the Australians argued for a narrower definition that included only the major Indian Ocean powers, such as India, South Africa, and Indonesia. The Indian delegation, however, contended that eventually the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf states would also have to be included in the proposed IOC.

The second main issue under discussion was the question of what the basic principles of such a community would be. Here there was agreement: the national sovereignty, geographical integrity and cultural independence of the member states would be stressed. There was also agreement that the Community would adhere to a liberal trade and investment system, would support the free flow of information, and would work for regional economic integration.

It was widely agreed that the Community would be the focus, at least in its initial stages, of socio-economic cooperation. The areas cited were those related to agricultural and rural development, to business joint ventures, to scientific and technological cooperation, to food-processing, biotechnology, entrepreneurship, to the foundation of an Indian Ocean Regional Clearance Union, and to cooperation in the exploitation of the resources of the ocean bed. India added the foundation of a formal "Indian Ocean Peace Zone" to the list of priorities; at the New Delhi meeting, an Indian delegate argued that regional cooperation would naturally have to include a security agreement to prevent the further spread of small arms to the region, which, as was proved during the conflict in Afghanistan, is a prime source of destabilisation in the region. Mechanisms to control drug-trafficking and to enhance the security of the smaller states in the area would also have to be developed.

Whereas the participants at New Delhi were almost unanimous in their support for the IOC pro-

posals, and in their agreement on the importance of the socio-economic issues, they did not reach agreement on the structures of the proposed community, or on its rules of membership. Further, by virtue of their membership of other regional forums, some countries, such as Indonesia, were less fully supportive of the idea of a new regional grouping. They pleaded for a more cautious approach to the foundation of the new grouping, that would benefit more from examining other possible models.

However, despite these areas of disagreement, I have no doubt that the IOC proposal will be translated into reality in 1996. Egypt, therefore, would be well advised to start thinking about the implications of the new grouping on its economy, and to begin devising strategies to benefit from the new venture. The foundation of the IOC would be likely to redirect trade in the region, and, as a result, reduce trade with non-IOC members. It is also likely to have large results as far as the exploitation of ocean resources is concerned. We should monitor this new venture, and establish an early partnership with it, possibly as an associate member, or even as a fully fledged member of it. India does not object to this eventually. We could also approach the IOC with a view to sharing our experience as a Mediterranean state. Egypt could offer its organisational experience on how to develop regional co-operation, and could emerge as a "linking power" between the states of the Mediterranean and those of the Indian Ocean. Our participation in the meetings planned for 1996 should be a priority, if only so that we may know what the future holds.

The writer is director of the Centre for Asian Studies at Cairo University.

## Two challenges, one reply

By Naguib Mahfouz



The resignation of the prime minister and the subsequent cabinet changes highlight two of the most important matters we face as the century draws to a close. How is Egypt going to cope with the coming century, and how will it secure improvements in the quality of life for those on low incomes?

Advances already made in information technology will pale in comparison to those that will come in the next century. The computer will be all powerful, and we will all be enmeshed in the internet, with unrestricted access to all the information we desire, or for that matter, do not desire. Without taking on board the far-reaching implications of the information revolution, it will be impossible to guarantee our future, even in the short term.

And what of the poorest members of our society? How are we to improve their lot? There are, of course, no easy answers, though it would seem to me that answers must be found since it is only by alleviating poverty and distress that we can hope to establish what I would term continual peace. Now these two pressing issues — how to cope with technological advances, particularly in the field of information, and how to help the least advantaged members of our society are, in fact intertwined. They both demand that we make strenuous efforts to improve the quality and content of the education that is offered our young people. It is not too simplistic to state that unemployment is a major impetus to terrorism — make people employable, gainfully, and you are well on your way to eradicating terrorism. Underline that advance by staging an intensive, anti-corruption campaign and the winning post is in sight.

Based on an interview with Mohamed Salamy.

## The Press This Week

By Hassan Fouad

This week the press focused on the formation of the new cabinet. On Friday, Ibrahim Nafie, editor-in-chief of Al-Ahram, wrote in an article entitled "The reality of change according to the challenges": "Constructive change is a product of valid reasoning, not a response to the ostensible wishes of the masses. Change in itself does not solve problems or achieve progress. In some cases and under certain circumstances change can be a step backwards and a hindrance to national action."

On Saturday Salama Ahmed Salama wrote in his daily Al-Ahram column a piece entitled "Not quite new" in which he said: "The new cabinet is not quite new. It reflects a desire for change and one for continuity, for introducing new elements while retaining old ones who experienced economic reform from its inception. This leads us to think that there is no change in the new government's objectives."

"This means closer cooperation between the prime minister and public opinion and the press to reach policies and decisions that are far removed from surprises and shocks." Al-Mussawwar magazine published the news of the formation of the new cabinet without comment.

As for October magazine, editor-in-chief Ragab El-Banna wrote a three-page article entitled "Why Gannoud?" in which he said: "As always, foreign observers have imagined that the cabinet reshuffle signifies a change in political direction and one of revision of certain policies. And, as always, President Mubarak has been clear and frank in ascertaining that there is no change in Egypt's policies."

"What is new in the new government is not policies but its work methodology aimed at bringing about achievements. The objectives are the same but the pace has become quicker. In short, this is a government of achievements, one which does not postpone solutions." On its front cover, October published a photograph of the new prime minister.

In Al-Akhar, Mustafa Amin wrote in his daily back-page column: "The new prime minister has inherited a legacy weighted down with debts. Repaying these debts is no easy matter — it is impossible to put matters right in five minutes. He needs patience and so do the people. His first task is to bring about peace between govern-

ment and people for there is no doubt that something approaching war exists between the two. The two do not trust each other and suspect each other's actions. The government has done nothing to win the opposition over. It has changed it from a rival to an enemy. The elections were an opportunity to close ranks and the people dream of a new in which we move forward. We aspired to beginning the 21st century now but instead, we found ourselves back in the democracy kindergarten after we had reached first-grade democracy. We know that we need cooperation between all factions. Egypt needs all the Egyptians not just some of them. It needs a ceasefire and not underground activity. We need everything out in the open and the people should feel they are partners and have the right to know everything. It is required of every Egyptian that he should take part in the building process and not be relegated to throwing stones or firing guns. We do not need swords to cut off heads, but we need writers and thinkers and working hands."

In the same issue of Al-Akhar the satiric writer Ahmed Ragab said in his daily column: "I spent a long time thinking what has changed. The cabinet was that of Ahmed, now it has become Haj Ahmed's." On Saturday Ahmed Ragab, writing to the subject,

wrote in his page one column in Al-Akhar El-Yom under the title "Question marks": "How can we penalise the candidate who secured his seat with blood and has now become a respectable deputy? And will the respectable deputy allow his accomplices to be penalised? And if the investigating authorities request the lifting of his immunity, will the request not be granted as usual? And can the respectable deputy abandon his things? Are not flagrant, violence and murder enough to cast doubt on the conduct of the elections?"

And should we not respect the rulings of the Appeals Court looking into election malpractices? And on the election suits filed, Al-Wafd editor-in-chief Gamal Badawi wrote a comment on Monday entitled "Suspended appeals" in which he said: "Parliamentary life in Egypt has not witnessed such a huge number of suits filed against election results: the number received by the Appeals Court until now is 950 suits. How can the judges deal with this flood of litigation at a time when we are complaining of the slowness of the judiciary before a pile-up of cases? This slowness has given the government the pretext of arraigning civilians before military courts. What will happen is that appeal court counsellors will look into the accusations and forward their findings to the People's Assembly only to meet the same fate that has met previous findings — the People's As-

sembly will freeze these rulings. Those wronged will turn to the judiciary once again to demand financial compensation and the state will pay out of the blood of the people."

On Monday Maye, the mouthpiece of the ruling National Democratic Party, published exclusive statements by President Hosni Mubarak on the new cabinet in which he said: "The cabinet reshuffle which took place was given due consideration and was the subject of serious study. I started to think about it last summer."

"As always, foreign observers have imagined that the cabinet reshuffle signifies a revision of certain policies. And as always, President Mubarak has been clear in ascertaining that there is no change in Egypt's policies. What is new in the government is not its policies, but its work methodology."

So that work in the new phase would proceed on the proper bases. I did not wish to announce the change beforehand in the public's interest and so that work would continue without any snags."

As for Al-Arabi newspaper, the mouthpiece of the Nasserist Party, its red banner headline on Monday read: "The true secrets behind: Gannoud's cabinet." Its editor-in-chief, Mahmoud El-Marraghi, wrote: "Between 7pm and 8pm on Tuesday evening, 2 January, there were two prime ministers: one in the conference hall with his ministers drafting the letter of resignation and the other

with the president to get the go-ahead for the new cabinet. In this dramatic fashion the cabinet change was brought about."

On Sunday and Monday, Al-Ahram published excerpts from the interview given by Mohamed Hassam Helal to the BBC on the occasion of the launching of his new book, *Secret Channels: Arab-Israeli Negotiations*. In the interview, Helal said: "President Mubarak is today in a position of authority. If we begin to think about an alternative, how would this come about? Through a coup d'état? Of course not. It must be through democratic means. But even then, I do not see viable alternatives. The political parties in Egypt are remnants of the past. None have had practical experience in the exercise of power."

"Moreover, I have complete confidence in President Mubarak and I fully support him. I do not want Egypt to enter into a series of misadventures. The crucial issue is not new alternatives, but a need for the country to regain its will."



## Close up

Salama A. Salama

### Living with Mossad

Cloudy peace, as the Israelis understand it, constitutes a continuation of conflict in different forms. It does not seem to imply the establishment of co-operation and neighbourly relations. Normalisation, it would appear, does not preclude spying, the elimination of the opposition, placing explosives or drug-running. These, it seems, are all elements of the co-existence that the Arabs are expected to enter into.

Two events occurred last week which reinforce this conclusion. First the assassination of Yehia Ayyash, the Hamas leader suspected by Israel as being the mastermind behind many of the suicide operations carried out during the last few years. When a mobile phone exploded, killing Ayyash, Israel was the first to announce the news and to congratulate itself, just as it had when Pafu Shargui was assassinated in Malta several months ago. The Israeli intelligence services were responsible for both actions.

The timing of Ayyash's assassination was not haphazard, nor was it merely an act of vendetta, an attempt to get rid of a Palestinian responsible for a series of suicidal operations that claimed many Israeli lives. It occurred, after all, at a critical phase in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, just as general elections are about to legitimise Arafat and the Palestinian National Authority, and after Arafat had himself been trying to come to an understanding with the opponents of the Palestinian-Israeli agreement, led by Hamas, that would end intercommunal squabbles.

Israel, seeking to sabotage this phase of the agreement and thus delay final negotiations, and seeking too to place the blame for any delay on the shoulders of the Palestinians, took the opportunity to murder Ayyash and thereby reignited the conflict between Arafat and his opposition.

Israel has thus managed to poison the atmosphere in a manner designed to encourage increasing divisiveness between Palestinians. Israel's actions also allow Shimon Peres to prove to the Israeli opposition, and to extremists in Israel, that the long arm of the military is still capable of destroying its enemies, wherever they may be.

Israel seeks to impose the peace that will suit it. This conclusion is lent further weight by an event that took place in Egypt. During interrogation, an Israeli agent suspected of spying on military secrets for Mossad and of peddling heroin, turned out to be one of the "Palestinian collaborators" on whom Israel has conferred its protection. This revelation, widely reported in the Egyptian press, lies behind recent protests by the new Israeli foreign minister against the Egyptian media.

It is only natural for Israel to protest against criticism in the Egyptian press. The connection between Israeli terrorism and Israeli claims to desire peace seem less natural. And one consequence of such unnatural linkage is the urgent necessity of Arab security systems to review Israeli activities, and the activities of their Palestinian collaborators, at a time when Israel's professed desire for peace seem increasingly spurious.



## An ambiguous harvest of terror

Last year's final months saw a series of disparate terrorist attacks. What holds these events together is the fatal dialectic between state and terror that they reveal, argues **Eqbal Ahmad**

October and November, 1995 were memorable months in one respect: there was terror or the threat of terror all around us. For the purposes of our discussion, which concerns the dialectic between the state and terrorism, we will recall here the cases of Aimal Kansi, three events in Pakistan, and Yitzhak Rabin's assassination.

The United States government has been advertising handsome rewards for information leading to the capture of Mir Aimal Kansi. The Pakistani is the prime suspect in the murder, on 25 January, 1993, of two CIA employees outside the agency's headquarters in Langley, Virginia. He is also accused of wounding three others. Mystery surrounds Kansi's case. His victims were Lansing C. Bennett, who was described in a *Washington Post* story as a "physician and intelligence analyst for the CIA", and Frank Dading, who was "assigned to tasks involving covert operations". Two of the injured were also identified as CIA agents.

Kansi obviously knew his men. He approached their cars at the stop light on Dolly Madison Boulevard, barely 500 yards from the gate of the CIA's 258-acre headquarters in Langley, shot them at close range, inches from the windows of their cars, spared a woman passenger, and sped away. The next day he was reported to have fled to Pakistan from the National Airport, a Washington D.C. fish bowl. His Pakistani passport had expired in March 1992, and, according to Pakistani officials, had not been renewed. So what did he travel on in the US also had its mysterious aspects. On arrival in March 1991 — on a business visa — he was spared the usual procedure for aliens entering the country. No one would say why. He requested political asylum — in 1991 — and was granted a renewable one-year work permit, which he did not renew. He was employed in an outfit, Excel Courier Inc., on a salary of \$700 a week, an unusual windfall for one with limited qualifications and scant

record of employment in the U.S. The company is owned by Chris Marchetti, son of Victor Marchetti, a former CIA official who had once been an aide to its director, Richard Helms. The Kansi family lives in Qertta, a city from which the CIA had engaged in covert operations, and had left behind a lot of disgruntled clients.

Our second case concerns Pakistan, which has played host during October-November to a number of terrorist events — two lucky escapes and one great atrocity. A group of army officers were arrested for planning a coup that would wipe out the top echelon of the army, execute the president and prime minister, and impose upon the country an Islamic caliphate of invited imagination. The officers claimed to be patriots who intended merely to aid the struggle in Kashmir. Without waiting for justice to take its course, Pakistan's premier Islamic party expressed its solidarity with them. And as if this were not chilling enough, a group of sectarian terrorists entered human-rights lawyer Asma Jahangir's house with the intent, and equipment, to commit murder.

On 19 November, the earth trembled in Islamabad, trees shook, homes rattled, and people died in a terrorist attack. Three Islamic parties in Egypt took credit for this foul and heinous crime. The communiqué from the International Justice Group was notable for its graphic sadism: "The platoon of martyr Khaled Ismail executed an operation today which sent skulls, limbs and corpses flying, and leaving dozens dead and wounded at Egypt's diplomatic mission in Islamabad."

A number of powers in various parts of the world have yet to come to terms with the fact that the dead and wounded of 19 November were victims, not only of the extremists who

call themselves Islamic, but also of the opportunism, deception, and crimes of governments. This is a long though uncomplicated subject because the states which I mention here have spawned sectarian terror in multiple if crude ways. There is here neither space nor time to elaborate this point fully but what follows can be considered a few pointers.

With Mohammed Zia ul-Haq's and his cohorts' collaboration, the United States has helped to revitalise and internationalise the notion of armed Jihad in a manner and in senses that the Muslim world has not experienced in recent centuries. To add insult to injury, Washington has not only used armed Islamism as an instrument of its policy, but has also abandoned and denounced it for its purposes have been served. The current anti-Americanism of the Islamic movement is causal; it is by no means pathological.

In Pakistan the governments — of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) no less than the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) — which came after Zia ul-Haq have continued to view opportunistically even the most sectarian and violent of Islamic parties. Thus both parties have variously co-opted with the Jama'at-Islami, the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-Islam, and the Aijman-i-Sipah-i-Sahabah, both have failed to amend the worst features of the blasphemy laws; both have shied away from repealing the Hudood Ordinances.

Moving on to my last case study, on 4 November, 1995, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel was assassinated at a peace rally in Tel Aviv. Governments and the world media then praised Rabin as a peace maker who had paid the 'price of peace'. The assassin belonged to B'yal, a militant Zionist organisation committed

to the colonisation of territories captured by Israel in the 1967 war. The establishment of these settlements has been Israel's bipartisan policy since 1969, in which all Israeli governments, including those in which Rabin held high positions, actively promoted the settler movement, established and financed no less than 300 settlements in the Occupied Territories, forcibly expropriated large amounts of Arab land, diverted and deprived native people of their water resources, and let loose armed Jewish zealots among a disarmed Muslim and Christian population — all in clear and flagrant violation of international law and agreements. This sordid record notwithstanding, Yitzhak Rabin and his government could still reasonably be described as 'peace makers' had the Oslo Agreements held for the dispossessed Palestinians some promise of restitution.

The 'peace process', however, does little to ameliorate these cruel injustices, and nothing whatsoever to roll back the illegal, officially subsidised and officially protected enclaves of extremism in the Occupied Territories. The Zionist right does dislike the 'peace process', but only because it appears to limit the orbit of its sectarian ambitions and its hopes of expelling the remainder of Palestinians from their homes. Yitzhak Rabin paid the price out so much of peace making but of letting loose a monster he and his party are even now reluctant to disown, either politically or ideologically. The symbiosis of terror, ideology and statehood is so deeply rooted in Zionist tradition that it will take decades to uproot it, even with a different model of peace making than that proposed by Oslo I & II. After all, among the saplings which have sprouted from these roots was the Likud, which has grown into one of Israel's two major parties.

## A perfect panacea for all ills?

The new cabinet faces the onerous challenge of striking a necessary balance between economic reform and social development, writes **Fathi Abdel-Fattah**

Regardless of the other important changes that the recent cabinet reshuffle has introduced, a basic observation to be made is the complete change that it marked in the group of ministers responsible for economic affairs — finance, planning, economy, and industry. A new minister of state for the economy has also been appointed. This catalogue of change, when added to the fact that the new prime minister, Kamal El-Ganzouri, was the former minister of planning, leads beyond a shadow of a doubt to the conclusion that the economy will be the main challenge to face the new ministry.

In the light of President Mubarak's announcements during the period when the new cabinet was being announced, one can list a number of basic factors pertinent to Egypt's economic reform project: the rate of development is to be increased on the one hand, while the interests of the lower and middle-range income groups are to be protected.

Herein, then, lies the real challenge, or perhaps the real impasse, which many countries have reached in projects for economic reform that are based on the same triangulated virtues of the free market, free competition and individual enterprise. It is this project that has been exhaustively argued for over the past decade or so as being the perfect panacea for all economic ills, and the only means of attaining real development. Nevertheless, in a significant number of countries, it has reached an apparent dead-end, and this is as true in the developed as in the developing world — both in the West, with its deep historical experience of capitalism, and in the East, for which market forces and the

free-market policies are still novelties.

In all these projects, however, the missing consideration seems, uniformly, to have been the social dimension of development.

If we look to the United States, for example, we can see the development of the most significant battle in years over the economic direction the country should take. The clash is taking place between the Republican Party, which currently enjoys a majority in Congress, and the democratic president, Bill Clinton. The Republicans want to balance the federal budget by the year 2002, as part of what the party hawks call their "Contract with America." Clinton, on the other hand, opposes this general project, and has vetoed eight bills presented for his signature under his umbrella, describing it as a "contract for America's destruction," since it ignores the interests of middle and low income groups in American society.

Similarly, in France, public attention has recently been preoccupied by the prospect of wide-ranging strikes in protest against the government's plan to cut that part of the budget allotted to health and social services.

Even in countries already part of the free-market economy, such as the United States and France, economic reform projects that ignore social and human consequences are confronting major obstacles. What is currently hap-

pening in Russia, and in a number of Eastern European countries, must add to the already considerable sense of unease with which these policies must be greeted. We should be highly suspicious of economics that are based solely on market forces, free competition and the encouragement of private enterprise.

The results of the recent elections in Russia and in Poland attest to this. These results, and the situation in these two countries, have proved that economic reform that involves a shift from a socialist, planned economy, to a kind of basic capitalism, may be very difficult to effect — certainly far more so than the opposite conversion from capitalism to socialism.

In Egypt, as in a great number of developing countries, it is natural that problems should arise in implementing economic reforms that involve the shift from centralised planning and the state ownership of production, to capitalist "open-door" type policies based on market forces and private entrepreneurship. This is all the more likely to be the case when we add unemployment, low development rates, and accumulating debt, which are global problems exacerbated by additional factors largely outside of state control, such as increasing economic globalisation, and the growing power of multi-national companies. The increasing pace of scientific and technological change has also changed many

## Soapbox

### Enlightenment or fraud?

Egyptian and Arab culture, since at least the beginning of the century, has followed two trends. The early adherents of one of these trends, secularists oriented towards Western culture, awarded themselves the self-congratulatory title "the generation of the enlightenment". Others, though, have been less flattering, seeing in the secularists nothing but imitators of the West, cultural carapace carriers in their baggage the Pandora's box that would contrive, once its contents were unleashed, to strip Egypt of its cultural specificity and detail any resurgence inspired by the country's Arab-Islamic essence.

The second trend has and is formed by Arab Islamists, who hold aloft the banner of resistance to any encroachments on the Arab-Egyptian essence of our national culture. The Arab Islamic pulse that they represent is found resonant by the majority of our population, which cannot be said for the secular Arabism, dissociated from religion, touted by the Baath Party and Gamal Abdel-Nasser.

It is the Arab Islamists who have been in the forefront of the battle to uphold literary and artistic culture. Yet leading Arab-Islamists seem to be mentioned by the media only as they are being co-opted by the secularists. This should come as no surprise, given that today's media was born secular and, since its inception, has been manipulated to promote only secularist ideas.

The secularists continue to control the media, and hence have a huge propaganda advantage over their opponents. Indeed, it is the secularists who control all the keys to education, culture and the media. Yet still they are incapable of extinguishing the Islamic vision and cultural identity of the people. This vision and identity has proved itself capable of breaking from all the chains that have been used to constrain it. It has reached the hearts and minds of new generations who want to be alerted to the ploys that might ensnare them. And this simple fact causes the secularists to cry out in despair.

This week's Soapbox speaker is a literary critic and assistant editor of the weekly Al-Mussawwar magazine.

Safinaz Kazim

Extremism is now an integral part of Israeli state and society. Note the assassin's relations with the Israeli defence and intelligence services. Yigal Amir is not a fringe figure. He is, as columnist Zeev Schiff put it, the "boy next door", a member of the elite Golani brigade in the Israeli Defence Force, an undercover agent of Shin Bet, an activist in the settler movement, and a law student at Bar Ilan University. The bullet which killed the Israeli prime minister came from the arsenal of the Israeli army. Naturally, conspiracy theories abound among Israelis, and most implicate their own secret services in the murder. Michael Harsagor, a respected historian at Tel Aviv University, concludes bluntly that "the attack could not have succeeded without the conspiracy of the security services." And Rabin's assassin has told the court ominously that the "Truth will turn Israel upside down".

For thoughtful Israelis this ought to serve as a painful moment of truth. For decades their state has engaged in organised terror over another people. To advance their agenda of colonising Palestine even Israel's 'liberal' politicians — Ben Gurion, Golda Meir, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres — opportunistically fostered movements and ideas which were extremist in their beliefs, violent in their outlook, and deeply contemptuous of life and civilisation. And to consolidate their conquests and colonisation they are engaged, even today, in creating an apartheid peace on the occupied West Bank and in Jerusalem. Such an inverted agenda for peace can bring lasting peace neither between Jews and Arabs in Palestine nor in the heart of Israel itself.

The larger conclusion to be drawn is general, and is not confined to Israel alone. Sectarian movements rarely possess the virtues of patience, discipline of discourse, culture of analysis, or sense of security in a broad and complex environment. Hence, on the mildest scale of threat, or the slightest suspicion of betrayal, they turn on friends and enemies alike, inwardly no less than outwardly.

of the rules of the game, even where the apologists of capitalism are concerned.

Because of these challenges, a necessary balance should be struck in order to ensure that development is genuinely social development concerned with the individual. Economic progress and true development cannot be realised in the shadow of widespread unemployment and the social and health problems that result from the kind of poverty that obstructs the potential of the individual, who should be the real creator, as well as the true beneficiary of development.

Reformist economic projects are now facing a turning-point, whether in the advanced capitalist countries, or in those making the transition from a planned to a non-planned economy. They face a turning point too in the Third World, whose countries have been turned into a kind of field for economic experimentation. What is at least clear is that, world-wide, substantial attempts are currently being made to reach new agendas for economic progress distinct from the pervasive traditional concepts of socialism and of capitalism.

As it stands, we have confused the issue, and are caught between the free market and free competition on the one hand, and the need to guarantee basic provisions for the workforce on the other. I believe that it is this dilemma that will most challenge Dr. El-Ganzouri and his new cabinet.

The writer is the director of Al-Gomhouria's newspaper centre for strategic studies.

## To The Editor

### Babylon ailing

Sir: The Iraqi people's disaster, resulting from the stringent UN sanctions imposed on their country, has transcended all acceptable limits. Meanwhile the Arab League seems unable to take a decisive and crucial stance with regards to the suffering of the Iraqi people.

President Saddam Hussein's greed could abolish Iraqi youth's dreams for a better standard of living. The Iraqi people have paid a very dear price for a mistake made by their ruler. Hospitals and clinics are void of even the most basic first aid. There is no medicine or anaesthetic available for surgical operations. Imagine the extent of the pain of the ill, particularly children, who must endure the pain of incision without anaesthetic.

Despite my anticipation of a US-led

drive to postpone lifting the sanctions, in order to completely flatten the military mechanism of the Iraqi army, I think Iraq will succumb and abide by the UN resolutions as a positive step towards Arab reconciliation prior to Arab-Israeli reconciliation. I call upon the UN to dispatch envoys to assess the declined standard of living on the ground. The Kingdom of Babylon will not pass by whatever challenges are before it.

Ashraf Faragallah Saad  
English Language Teacher  
Beit Smei

### Antiquities alert

Sir: Let us pray that we are able to stop the exhibition of Egyptian antiquities in America. I suspect Egypt is the only country in the world that exhibits its antiquities abroad

in exchange for merely a few dollars. Enough damage has been caused by previous exhibits abroad, which no repairs can bring back to their pristine state. Egypt has been trying for years to convince the British Museum to return the Sphinx's beard, which cannot possibly be of any use to Britain.

So let us spare our antiquities from harm, and let us think long and hard before deciding to move Ramses' statue, so that we are certain it will not be damaged during its moving.

Adel Boutros  
Engineer  
Helipolis

### Racism doesn't help

Sir: Leah Rabin, when asked why her husband did not wear a bullet proof vest on the day of his assassination, replied that

her husband had told her there was no need because Israel is not Africa. The racism of that statement shocked me. As is evident from Rabin's murder, assassinations have nothing to do with the race of the assassin and everything to do with the popularity and love the leader inspires amongst his people. Whether in Africa or elsewhere, political leaders should learn from the ignorance of this statement.

Ali Mohamed Salim  
Port Said

### Positive force

Sir: Egypt's membership in the UN Security Council, as representative of Africa, would be of benefit to both African and Arab countries. Given Egypt's excellent relations with many countries of the world, Egypt could be a positive force in

dealing with such issues as the UN sanctions imposed on Libya and Iraq, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Middle East peace process.

Shazy Ismail Bahr  
Aswan

### Unnecessary expenses

Sir: I would like to comment on the work being done to renovate the underpass before the airport on Salah Salem Street. I am baffled by the extravagant expense Egypt is paying to replace the tiles on the walls of the underpass with ceramic tiles. Is this really necessary? Do we really need to spend perhaps hundreds of thousands of pounds on minor renovations while, excuse my adage, people are starving?

Mohamed Mansour  
Helipolis

### Zoo in shambles

Sir: I would appreciate it very much if a member of your staff could investigate the efforts being made to renovate the Giza zoo. I read in the papers that a new supervisor is heading a renovation effort intended to spruce up the dirty grounds.

If I may offer some suggestions, I think it is imperative that the animal cages be rebuilt and kept clean. Also, a lot more effort should be put into directing people around the grounds in an orderly fashion.

This would most definitely necessitate the banning of all those bothersome vendors.

Soad Khafifa  
Giza





Montserrat Caballé

photo: Sherif Sonbol

## Celestial sister

David Blake  
travels the  
Milky Way

**Concert:** Montserrat Caballé, Cairo Opera Orchestra; José Collado, conductor; Moin Hall, Cairo Opera House; 7 January

Where is she? She is over there. She is coming. The Caballé presence says I am here; this is it. Listen and look. Caballé is in her place, on yet another opera house stage.

Great singers are all crepuscular animals, too beautiful to be human. They are creatures of the night, making their own light as Caballé does here. She's big and not young. These are her invaluable virtues. If they keep their voices, the older the great ones get, the cuter they become. Every ounce of the art of singing is made audible and visual in this instance.

Caballé's appearance is the closest relative of her voice. The two are wrapped around each other, parent to child. She is a big lady, almost immense and immensely beautiful. She pads across the stage, her wrist and finger movements powerfully suave and fastidious, like her singing. A celestial monster, she excites before she has opened her mouth.

Take a good look at her. She is the last of her tribe; her planetary sisters are no longer around. Now she has taken her place center-stage front and prepares herself. If you think all the business of opera a giggle, then remember she is better at sending it up than anyone since Groucho Marx. She imitates herself better than anyone else can do. She is disaster-proof and a super-model. She wears clothes better than the 9 foot tall skinheads. She knows how to decorate the product, herself, and stands on the stage like a Marie de Medici.

Where does she come from? Spain, like Patti, Malibran and the rest of the Garcia tribe of singers. The Spanish voice has power and beauty, but among aficionados its special fascination is its mastery. This gives to their every vocal utterance a power of actuality, never empty noise. It is extremely erotic.

Caballé has all these virtues. And the Cairo Opera Orchestra, under José Collado lived up to her demands. There was a complicity between diva, conductor and orchestra. The contract was to have a good time.

Preparations and ovations are over. The performance has begun. She throws back her grandly sculpted head, the great throat cavern opens, and out comes the voice. It is one of the four supreme voices of the last part of the 20th century. It has all the glamour, the mystery and the insolent ease — well, there she is, that's a voice. Words won't do.

She sang two Rossini scenes as openers, one from *L'Assedio di Corinto*, and the other from *Tancrède*. Warm-up pieces. After the *Baccanale* from *Samson et Dalila* for orchestra, the best piece from the first part of the programme was *O mio lre immortelle* from Gounod's opera *Sappho*. Opera is where Caballé belongs. This piece from the falcon repertoire allowed her to unleash some of the big dark areas of the voice — not as powerfully as she did before, but still voluptuously smooth with limpid, heavenly soft high tones, floating and lunar.

The last part of the evening's programme consisted of Spanish songs and scenes by Serrano, Chapí and Caballero, with a gentle, witty performance of the *Concilio de Palomo* from an opera by Barberi. All these pieces were done with such ease and delicacy, it was difficult to realise how difficult and treacherous such things are to sing.

Caballé has nothing to hide as an artist. She is elemental, direct and wise like the angels who, from oo high, wink so knowingly at us. Her singing is all of a piece, a product of many strands, ethnic, academic and personal. The technique is invisible, the breath apparently eternal, the tone, forward but never loudly assertive. She does not actually sing — she spins out audio mysteries which are composed for those like her into forms. But her greatest strength is to put all these elements into the troublesome battlefield of opera. For her, it is simple as speaking.

Her transformation at the close of the programme erased the years. There she stood, much the same as always, giving her incomparable Adriana Lecouvreur. She can still stand in a vast space and efface it by the sheer power and projection of her voice. We had at times the dark, aggressive majesty of Norma and Lucetia, the tone that

could quieten multitudes. Its authority was operatically absolute. Covent Garden, London, Vienna, New York are all shining places on her necklace of unforgettable performances. Unforgettable Marschallin. Caballé will have no worries. The warmth and radiance of her personality will melt all snobs.

**Cairo Symphony Orchestra: Great Symphonies 4: Gomal Abdel-Rahim, Introduction and Rondo Baladi; Tchaikovsky, Concerto No. 1 in B flat minor, piano soloist Moushira Issa; Sibelius, Symphony no 1 in D major; Moin Hall, Cairo Opera House; 5 January**

What happened to Moushira Issa's Porsche? The other two items of this concert arrived in proper style. Gomal Abdel-Rahim's music opened the concert and Sibelius's massive grandiose surfaced closed it. Yusef El-Sisi, the maestro, took over the Cairo Symphony Orchestra and set an heroic formula.

And Issa? She occupied the central position and arrived on foot. The cool, powerful car she always drives was gone. So was her own cool, over the top of the piano anyway.

Where were her cerebral octaves, stinging the keyboard, and the diver hirc accuracy of her pounces in climaxes? Issa is more an event than a pianist. In this age of the global trek Oscar winner pianists who soon tire around the edges, she's an original. A treasure of daring, hers is a flip insouciance at the rulers of lump land, Macho Piano County.

The *B flat minor* should have been her unmasked ball. Said, it was not. What went wrong? The concerto is a well-used piece of old concert hall furniture; everyone has sat upon it and left a mark. Custom has made it fashionable sleaze. Nothing new. But there are ways around this.

Issa ignored the designer stibble that most performers delightedly bring out of the concerto. But what did she project? Was she trying out her own aesthetic surgery on this concerto? If so, the wrinkles and sags still showed brutally.

In the first movement — ironically labelled *allegro non troppo e molto maestoso* by his composer who had

vain hopes in the speed at which most performers take it — the first of the problems arose. How far can you go with wrong notes? Or how far should you permit yourself to go with wrong notes? Cortot solved the problem. He grew legendary almost because of his wrong notes. Issa has not yet reached this exalted state. Too few wrong notes can be termed pedantic; too many, self indulgent. Issa tries to upturn the classics and find, at any cost, a new angle. Mostly it works because almost everyone is beginning to hate the word "classical music". But it takes courage to turn the *B flat minor* into a rag-bag. Maybe Issa had a grand aggressive design, but the fingers seemed not to register the message.

The second movement was the most errant. It shoots about, taxing pianists' touch on the keyboard. Issa was like Petruschka. Euphoria, damnation and unbearable tension. This was the most successful area she entered. Authentic Issa.

In the *andante*, not a tear squeezed from under any lid. Heroic dismissal: life is an open city bombed to rubble. Did Issa believe it or was she fed up? There was no cake in the kitchen even for the poor to eat in this *B flat minor*. Issa must have come in some sort of vehicle. She must have drove it up on to the pavement, got out and left it for the police — that's us — to clean up. Really very remarkable Issa. Courage to the end as the trash man rumbles towards you. It was exhausting. It was bewitching.

The beginning of the concert had a restful desert-like calm: sound, memories heard from far away, climate and continent unsure, a winter sunshine.

The Sibelius brought El-Sisi, alone, into another realm. He had been carrying on majestically. Now, like Issa, he faced his own mystery. Sibelius is stormy. Ups and downs like Bruckner but shorter. The fashion swings have been hard on Sibelius, but like an unmeltable iceberg, he drifts silent and solid through the symphonic world, always a huge presence, never ignorable.

El-Sisi enjoys tone, rich and deep. The symphony was given this. The big cool object glided on unrecognisable. In what age was it written? The Ice Age or the Fire? Maybe, as the pundits predict, the coming one.

### Theatre

## A witch minus the broom

At the National, Nehad Selajina  
watches with dismay as *The Witch*  
falls to get off the ground

Yusri El-Guindi's *Al-Sahera* (*The Witch*) took a long time arriving at the National, growing in the process from a slim one-act play into a ponderous three-hour performance. It was six months in rehearsal, with occasional mishaps and forced breakoffs; ominously, one week before the scheduled opening, its director Mohsen Helmi had a bad fall and had to limp through the final days with the help of a crutch. The dress rehearsal was a cheerless, disheartening experience, and weeks later, the play has not improved.

I had looked forward to Samiha Ayyoub's invigorating theatrical presence and expected from El-Guindi the kind of passionate writing and fresh insight that inform his best work. Besides, the presence of Mohsen Helmi — a director famous for his colourful, vigorous style — as head of the production team, augured well. It was his debut at the National and one did not doubt that he would seize the opportunity to shake this old respectable establishment and shake it out of its habitual smug stolidity. The boisterous, farrowed atmosphere of his *chef-d'oeuvre*, *El-Muhababainyah* (*Street Performers*), was too much to hope for; but something of its zestful earthenness, galloping rhythm and imaginative visual

liveliness was definitely expected. What happened, in fact, was a cacophonous clash of styles. While El-Guindi's dramatically understated and verbally grandiloquent text chased after grandiose effects, Helmi seemed desperately determined to undercut its bombastic declamations and prick its rhetorical bubbles. Ironically, the play's spuriously complex double-plot schema, with two different spatio-temporal levels and sets of characters, helped to exacerbate this sense of a conflict of artistic directions. The performance creaked along laboriously, mercilessly jolting the audience from scene to scene and from one level to the other until one felt one was watching two unrelated plays — and flat, dull ones at that. Not even Ayyoub's bewitching act and mesmerising presence could heal the fissure or seal the cracks. And this is saying a lot.

In any part, Ayyoub is always a pleasure to watch; her overpowering personality and stirring voice rarely fail to rouse the audience whatever the play. I have seen her breathe life into some of the dullest imaginable lines and endow some dimly shallow texts with imaginary depths. *The Witch*, however, beat her. She put up a valiant fight, but she did not even have the bare rudiments of a part to

work with. The original short version of the play, entitled *The Rape of Galila* (read the rape of Egypt), is illuminating in this respect. In it, the eponymous holy Galila — shrewdly nicknamed "the witch" by corrupt authorities though venerated by the poor and downtrodden — remains tantalisingly absent throughout. Only in the final scene does she appear — as an ethereal figure in a bridal gown — to carry the soul of her slain hero and defender up to heaven. Obviously, this short, unpretentious political parable, with its typical popular hero, simple confrontations and vague, historical setting, was neither fit for the National nor for a formidable star like Ayyoub. It had to be re-tooled to new measurements and when the material, however stretched, proved insufficient, the author resorted to patching.

In the new version, Galila, though still safely out of sight, is provided with an all too tangible, vociferous Doppelgänger in the figure of an all-seeing, incriminating preaching good witch. As commentator-cum-narrator, she keeps intruding on the few events of the flimsy story, telling us what we have already seen, padding it up with rhyming fussy alogans and bombastic orations. Soon enough, her presence becomes not only positively boring, but

also, since the audience are neither deaf, blind nor dim, deeply offensive. Still, rather than weary the audience into submission, the witch's unrelenting verbal avalanche alerts them to its underlying dangerous history. Like the typical fanatic, her political creed is equated with absolute moral right and any opposition to it with diabolical malevolence. Indeed, the confusion of politics and religion in this play is deeply disturbing and so is the progress of its folk hero from rebellion and lawlessness to *jihad*, or holy war then martyrdom. One wonders if El-Guindi, an enlightened progressive intellectual, has unwittingly come under the influence of the arguments of the political Islamists. The confusion was perceptible in the first version where twice the honourable benefactor kneels as if facing a holy shrine. In the second it becomes quite pronounced, thanks to the loquacious witch.

To pad *The Rape of Galila* still further and make it look structurally elaborate, El-Guindi tacked a parallel plot, set in modern times, about a destitute citizen who is robbed of his lawful inheritance by the government and reduced to dwelling in the tomb of his aristocratic ancestors. The arrival of an eviction order at the hands of a small bureaucratic un-

leashes his tongue (not that he had been silent before) and we are treated to a full account of his misfortune and sorrows, punctuated with sentimental songs. At the end of it, the poor bureaucrat suddenly drops dead, and we are told that the "truth" killed him. More likely, it was boredom that did it.

The two stories, which are given mostly through narration, are arranged in an alternating scenes to create a false impression of complexity and variety. But neither the alternation nor the plethora of witty songs and elaborate dances (roped in by the director) could do anything to alleviate the boredom or dispel the vexing feeling that one was being cheated.

I nearly broke my heart to listen to the great Ayyoub ranting redundant banalities, to watch a consummate comedian like Osama Abbas limply repeating the same story over and over again and in the same ungainly, spiritless language, to see some of the best actors of the National reduced to extras or to rigid mechanical puppets, and worst of all, to note El-Guindi's unflinching, laborious striving after symbolism at every stop. What a lot of good, expensive talent was wasted in that show.

### Listings

#### EXHIBITIONS

**Adel El-Sawi (Paintings)**  
Mashreq Gallery, 8 Champs-Élysées, Tel 770 623. Daily exc. Fri. 11am-5pm. Until 11 Jan.  
Recent works by a leading contemporary artist.

**Mervat Rabat (Paintings)**  
Ramesse-Hellm, pool level. Daily 10am-2pm & 3pm-5pm. Until 12 Jan.

**Mahmoud Muntal (Drawings)**  
Rambouillet Hall, Cairo Atelier, 2 Karim Al-Dawla St, Downtown. Tel 574 6730. Daily exc. Fri. 10am-1pm & 3pm-5pm. Until 12 Jan.

**Josef Pellerer**  
Cairo-Berlin Gallery, 17 Tawfiq Al-Ghaili St, Bob Al-Louh, Tel 393 1764. Daily exc. Sun. 12pm-5pm. Until 14 Jan.  
Exhibition of works by New York-based photographer entitled *Egypt, Land Under The Black Sun*.

**Yasuh Manganaris**  
Cairo-Berlin Gallery, as above, 15-25 Jan.  
Exhibition of paintings by Alexandrian-Greek artist.

**Omar El-Dal (Photographs)**  
Lobby of the Jamsil Centre, AUC, Al-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 354 2968. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 15 Jan.

**Hassan Ali Ahmed (Paintings)**  
Espase Gallery, Al-Sheraf St, Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Daily exc. Fri. 10am-3pm & 3pm-5pm. Until 18 Jan.

**Abdel-Moukhammed (Paintings)**  
Salama Gallery, 36/4 Ahmed Orabi St, Mohandessin. Tel 346 3242. Daily exc. Fri. 10am-230pm & 230pm-5pm. Until 18 Jan.

**Rash Marth (Watercolours)**  
Cairo Atelier, 2 Karim Al-Dawla St, Downtown. Tel 574 6730. Daily exc. Fri. 10am-1pm & 3pm-5pm. Until 19 Jan.

**Mohamed Mohib (Watercolours)**  
Cairo Atelier, 2 Karim Al-Dawla St, Downtown. Tel 574 6730. Daily exc. Fri. 10am-1pm & 3pm-5pm. Until 19 Jan.

**Happy Sunday (Photographs)**  
French Cultural Centre, 27 Sabri Al-Ahmed St, Heliopolis. Tel 417 4824. Daily exc. Sun. 10am-2pm & 3pm-5pm. 16-25 Jan.

**To the Oriental Sources of La Fontaine**  
French Cultural Centre, Mounira en-Nasser, Al-Hogya St, Heliopolis. Tel 352 3056. Daily exc. Sun. 10am-2pm & 3pm-5pm. Until 30 Jan.

**Discovering the Oriental inspirations of Fabrice Jean de La Fontaine**  
French Cultural Centre, 3 Al-Sheikh Rihan St, Heliopolis. Tel 340 6791. Daily exc. Sun. 10am-2pm & 3pm-5pm. Until 31 Jan.

**Art in School**  
French Cultural Centre, as above, until 31 Jan.  
Children's drawings and paintings.

**Alberto Barri**  
Zanabek Centre of Arts, 1 Al-Mahad Al-Suway St, Zamalek. Tel 340 6211. Daily exc. Fri. 10am-5pm & 5pm-12pm. Until 23 Feb.

**Sixty works by the artist exemplify his artistic journey through graphics.**

**Alfred Stieglitz (Photographs)**  
Sony Gallery, AUC, Al-Sheikh Rihan St, Heliopolis. Tel 340 6791. Daily exc. Fri. 10am-5pm & 5pm-12pm. Until 29 Feb.

**An exhibition of work by Alfred Stieglitz, celebrated American photographer. Stieglitz pioneered the use of cameras in the snow and rain; the first to photograph skyscrapers, clouds and cityscapes. He was one of the pioneers of colour photography.**

**The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud and Khalil**  
1 Kafour Al-Ahmed St, Dokki. Tel 336 3376. Daily exc. Mon, 10am-6pm. Egypt's largest collection of nineteenth century European art, amassed by the late Mohamed Mahmoud, including works by Courbet, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Monet and Rodin.

**Coptic Museum**  
Mar Gurgis, Old Cairo. Tel 362 8766. Daily exc. Fri. 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11am. 1pm-4pm.

**Founded in 1910, the museum houses the finest and largest collection of Coptic art and artefacts in the world.**

**Islamic Museum**  
Port Said St, Ahmed Maher St, Bob Al-Khalil. Tel 390 9930/9930 1520. Daily exc. Fri. 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11.30am, 1.30pm-4pm.

**A vast collection of Islamic arts and crafts including manuscripts, leatherware, ceramics, textiles, woodwork and coins, drawn from Egypt's Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk periods and other countries in the Islamic world.**

**Museum of Modern Egyptian Art**  
Opera House Grand Centre. Tel 340 6861. Daily exc. Mon, 10am-1pm & 3pm-5pm.

**A permanent display of paintings and sculpture charting the modern art movement in Egypt, from its earliest pioneers to latest practitioners.**

**Mohamed Nagui Museum**  
Children's Pyramid, 9 Mahmoud Al-Ghaili St, Giza.  
A museum devoted to the paintings of

Mohamed Nagui (1888-1936).

**Mohamed Nagui Museum**  
Tahrir St, Giza. Daily exc. Sun and Mon, 9am-1.30pm.  
A permanent collection of work by the sculptor Mohamed Nagui (d. 1936). The house was once owned to Saad Zaghloul stands near Qasr Al-Nil Bridge.

**FILMS**

**Susan Do, Susan Do's**  
Japanese Cultural Centre, 106 Qasr Al-Ahli St, Garden City. Tel 353 3962. 11 Jan. 6pm.  
Directed by Masayuki Sato (1992).

**Le Cadavre D'El Del (The Fall of The Gods)**  
Indian Cultural Centre, 3 Al-Sheikh Rihan St, Zamalek. Tel 340 6791. 14 Jan. 6pm.  
Directed by Luciano Visconti, 1969.

**French Films**  
French Cultural Centre, 27 Sabri Al-Ahmed St, Heliopolis. Tel 417 4824. Le Rouge Et Le Noir (Red And Black) 15 Jan. 7pm.  
Directed by Claude Autant-Lara, 1954. L'Argente (Money) 17 Jan. 7pm.  
Directed by Robert Bresson, 1962.

**Cineplex change their programmes every Monday. The information provided is valid through to Sunday after which it is wise to check with the cineplex.**

**Nine Minutes**  
Cairo Sheraton, Galia St, Giza. Tel 360 6081. Daily 10.30am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 8pm. 15 Jan. 7pm.  
Directed by Chantal Akerman, 1985. Tel 253 1072. Daily 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.

**Drop Zone**  
Karin 1, 15 Ennassr St, Downtown. Tel 924 836. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

**Waterworld**  
Karin 1, as above. Metro, 35 Tolstoy St, Heliopolis. Tel 391 3897. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

**Minsky Theatre**  
Al-Haram Al-Azhar St, Giza. Tel 3583538. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

**Free Willy II**  
Normandy 31, Al-Ahram St, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0254. Daily 12.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.

**Pocahontas (Animated)**  
Tahrir, 112 Tahrir St, Dokki. Tel 333 4726. Daily 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. MGM. Kolyan Al-Nasr St, Giza. Tel 352 3056. Daily 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

**Al-Sabara (The Sorcerer)**  
The National Theatre, Al-Azhar. Tel 579 1778. Daily 5pm.

**Al-Sabara (The Sorcerer)**  
Al-Sabara, Qasr Al-Ahli St. Tel 353 2484. Daily 5pm.

**Debut: Ya Shadia (With Your Permission, Ma'am)**  
Al-Farm, Ramesse St. Tel 578 2444. Daily exc. Mon, 9.30pm.

**Al-Sabara (The Sorcerer)**  
Al-Sabara, Qasr Al-Ahli St. Tel 353 2484. Daily 5pm.

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### Around the galleries



Said Kameh

STILL on at the Centre for Arts, Zandalek, the 24th General Exhibition which includes works in different media from a broad spectrum of Egyptian artists. Worth looking out for are works by Hamed Sayed, figure study sculptures by Hassan Heshmat and paintings of fellahs by Vissella Farid.

Gallery space at Cairo Atelier is given over to Mohamed Nabih Osman's 27 paintings which lovingly register the visual realities of commoners at work, while the room facing plays host to 23 paintings, technically accomplished, academic still lifes and portraits by Said Kameh.

At the gallery attached to the Faculty of Fine Arts, Zamalek, are ceramic vessels by Amina Ebeid. These bespeak her research and interest in the history of this most ancient of art forms.

Reviewed by Nagwa El-Ashri







High-ranking government officials, scholars and professionals gathered to discuss major issues from housing to earthquakes, marketing to urban planning. **Nermeen El-Nawawi** attended

Professor Tarek Khalil, dean of the Graduate School of Miami University, gave a lecture on technology management. As the president of the International Association for the Management of Technology, he explained the enormous change in technology and its effect on the development

Recommendations covered a wide spectrum of fields, with special attention given to developing undergraduate and graduate educational programmes.



This year, the first hospital incinerator conceived and constructed nationally will come into operation. **Mahmoud Bakr** reports

**Diagramme of the first incinerator constructed to the military workshops**

**Moushira Abdel-Malek**

**Nigel Ryan** discovers the perfect place to end it all

Shehan deserves a lighter clientele. The people who sit on the pavement always seem cherty enough. They should be encouraged to come inside in an attempt to dispel the depression which, it would appear, is currently the preserve only of those who seek the inner sanctum.

spring  
Shehan. 8, Champollion. Downtown. Tel:  
5781412/5754863

**By Samia Abdenmour**

41. Assault (5)  
42. Shield-shaped (7)  
43. Injurious; foul (7)  
44. Brotherhood (5)

SLICE    BELLOW    OWEN  
LOOSE    BOWZE    BIND  
PRESIDENCE    LOTUS  
LIND    NITRO  
LIVE    GRAVE    SHOT  
MAYN    RAGED    PASS  
SAINT    EMERY    BOPIN  
LAIN    RAS  
FAIR    ASSURANCE  
THIRP    ALCOHA    BELIV  
LION    SASS    SATE

Last week's solution

**DOWN**  
1. Sumptuous (5)  
2. Flush out (5)  
3. Aromatic seeds used to flavour sweets and liqueurs (5)  
4. So far (3)  
5. When repeated, form of cheering speech (4)  
6. Arab prince (4)  
7. To ... with love (3)  
8. Manner; fashion (5)  
9. Intentional unfriendly treatment (12)  
10. Eggs (3)  
11. Fermented grape juice (4)  
12. Goals (4)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
14				15					16				
17				18					19				
20			21				22	23		24			
25		26				27				28			
		29	30	31			32			33	34	35	
36	37	38		39			40		41				
42			43				44	45					
46					47	48				49			
50					51	52				53			
			54			55			56		57	58	59
60	61	62		63			64	65			66		
67		68			69	70				71			
72					73					74			
75					76					77			

13. Residue (4)	48. An emblem on Athenian coins (3)
21. Alienation (12)	51. Health resort (3)
23. Consume (3)	53. Musical note (2)
26. ... and behold! (2)	55. Appropriate; make one's own (5)
27. Lady's garment (3)	57. Allurement (5)
28. Fifty are five of these (4)	58. Summon; call up spirit from the dead (5)
30. Thrack (3)	59. M. Coty et al (5)
31. Plane; level' (4)	60. Encourage (4)
33. Ancient Egyptians' goddess of fertility (4)	61. Male guinea pig (4)
34. French dream (4)	62. Quaintly artistic (4)
35. Summer (4)	64. Sense (4)
36. Musical or literary composition (4)	65. Poker stake (4)
37. Advanced (4)	68. Weather directions (3)
38. Room in 552 (4)	70. US short story writer, critic and poet (3)
40. Wash out (4)	71. Fries (3)
43. Heavy weights (4)	
45. Busy insect (3)	

**Fayza Hassan**

# No penny for my thoughts

Moulded by these taboos, I married a man who professed to be a liberal, where he was concerned that is. His nearest and dearest were actively encouraged to share his opinions. "You are absolutely right", became the Open Sesame to marital peace.

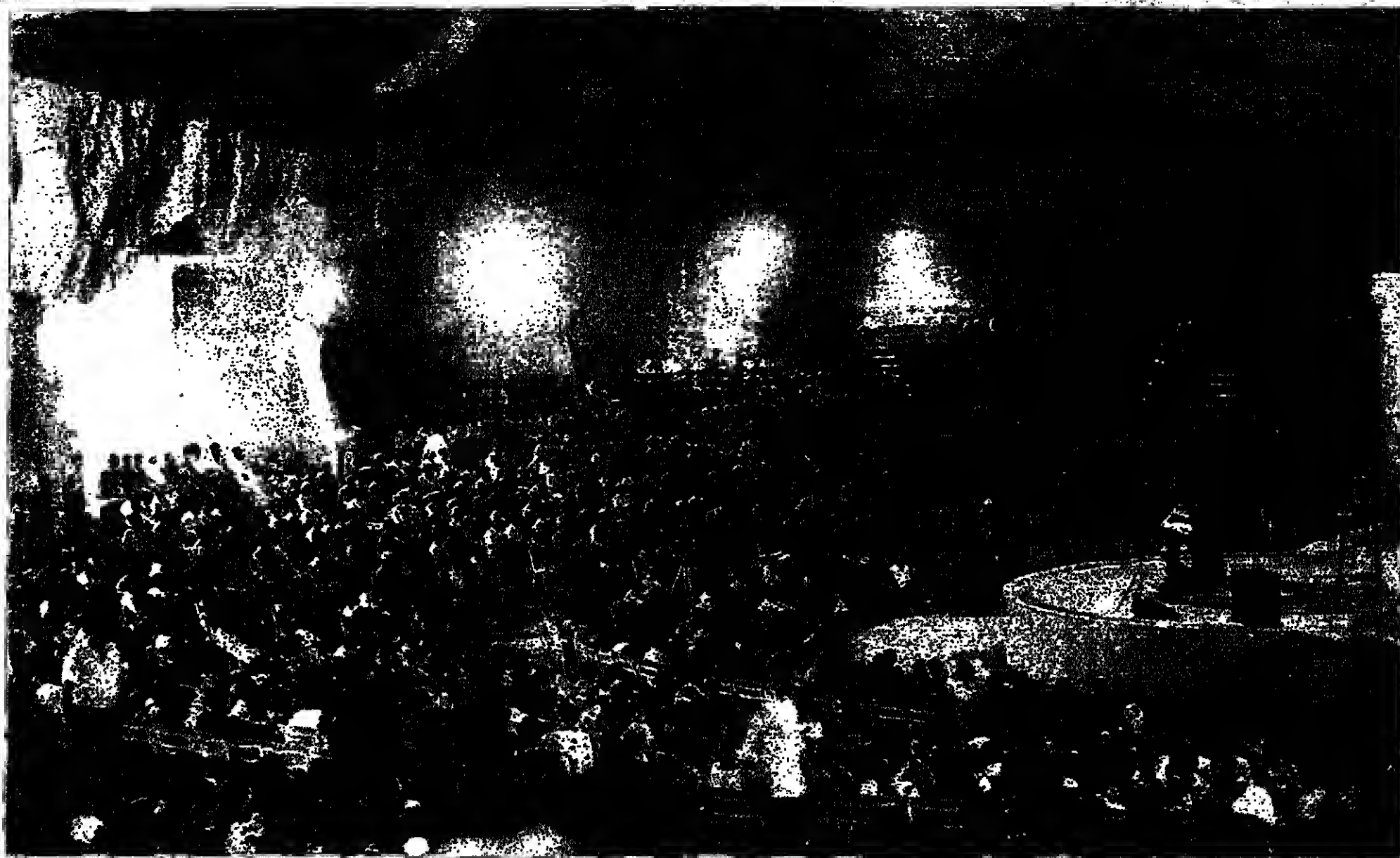
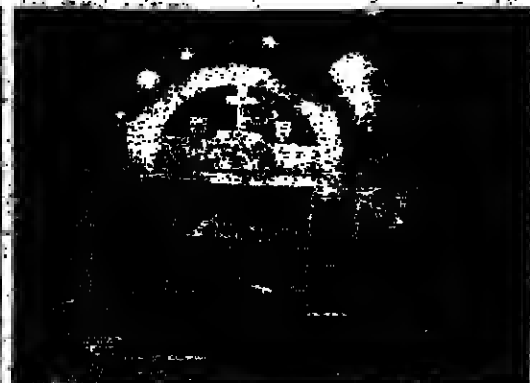
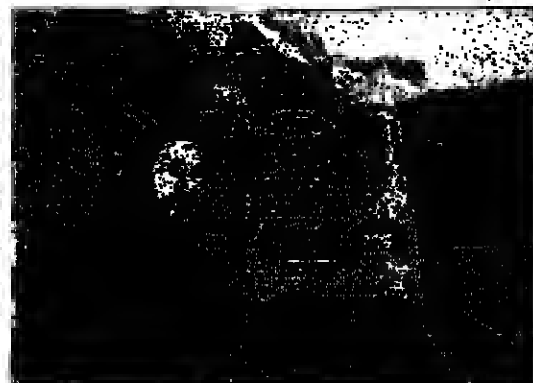
In this last decade I have been busy exploring the arcana of political correctness and learning the jargon. I am almost fluent now, but the rumour has it that the whole concept may soon be outdated. That doesn't bother me in the least; I have become an expert at adopting ready-made ideas: whatever comes next, I will rise to the occasion. The question, however, is when, before my angel makes his/her final come-back, will I be allowed to think my own thoughts?

**Fayza Hassan**









The meeting hall (above), a girl from the Zaballin community, a sculptor at work on a relief, the entrance to the cathedral, and the altar of St Paul's subterranean church. Photos: Sharif Sonbol

## A monastery and a miracle

A cavern cathedral forms the centrepiece of a magnificent monastery in a series of caves in the Moqattam Hills. Sherine Nasr describes the unusual site and the history and legends surrounding it

In the *zaballin* area of the Moqattam Hills, one of Cairo's poorest areas, lies the magnificent monastery of St Samaan. This monastery is no ancient monument — in fact it is a unique combination of the natural and the architectural. The area of the monastery embraces several natural caves, four of which have been converted into churches.

The main structure, the cathedral, is on a scale so huge as to be able to accommodate around 20,000 people. At the far end, on the ceiling before the large altar, is a huge, high-set relief of the Virgin Mary carrying the holy child. It is said to have been found, already carved, before the cathedral was excavated. "Almost a million tons of limestone were removed from inside the cave before the cathedral took its present form," said the aptly-named Father Samaan, senior priest at the monastery. "Before the rubble was removed, we had to creep inside the cave on our knees to see the

statue." The carving was originally rough, he said, but after the cathedral was excavated, the carving was polished.

The massive cathedral comes to life every Thursday evening as congregations of thousands fill the massive auditorium, dominated by a relief carving on a huge rock, towering high above the people and depicting a scene from the Sermon on the Mount.

Also inside the monastery area is another rock-hewn church, St Mark's, a subterranean structure whose ground-level dome is decorated with colourful frescoes of the crucifixion and resurrection. Above St Mark's, approached by a stairway, is another part of this cave, now transformed into a giant meeting hall, adorned with life-size reliefs depicting the local miracle. St Paul's church is another underground cave, discovered by chance in 1986. While work was in progress on other areas of the site, a giant block accidentally fell from a bulldozer. It plunged through a hole into a deep cave, supported by two columns. Father Samaan said that the church was dedicated to St Paul because its inner features resemble those of St Paul's Monastery on the Red Sea coast. St Samaan is dedicated to a local saint,

who, by tradition, moved the Moqattam Hills. The moving of the hills of the Moqattam have remained such a strong image in people's minds that even a thousand years after the miracle, a monastery on the site is named after the miracle worker.

Samaan's biography, as recorded in an ancient manuscript in St Anthony's Monastery in the Red Sea area, relates how, in 979AD, the Fatimid Caliph Al-Muezz Liddin Allah, a great enthusiast of religious debates, frequently gathered Christian and Jewish religious leaders together in open discussion. The Jewish government minister, Jacob Ibn Kalis, in an effort to cast doubt on the Christian religion, quoted from the Bible, St Matthew's gospel: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

The caliph was naturally sceptical and was about to declare the Christian faith a fallacy when, the story goes, providence stepped in and produced Samaan. The humble shoemaker moved a hill from its previous location at the then Birket Al-Fil (now Al-Helmya Al-Gedida) to Moqattam, and the Christians were spared.

Until the early 1970s, there was no proper church in



the area, although 95 per cent of the local community are Christians; then some 17,000 thousand people, now around 25,000. Back then, their homes were improvised hovels. Later some proper housing was provided and

a church built on a 1000 square metre area.

Two of the church's icons depict the miracle of Moqattam. One shows how the rays of the sun filled the space beneath the hills as they moved; the other depicts Samaan as a middle-aged, bald, one-eyed man carrying a large jar on his back.

"St Samaan is always portrayed this way, because he used to distribute water to the old and disabled even before his fame as a miracle worker spread," explained Father Samaan. Some relics of St Samaan, and a broken jar, said to be one he carried, are now in pride of place in his cathedral, some 200 metres from the church, placed there in 1991 after their discovery in St Mary's Church in Babylon Al-Darg in Old Cairo.

### EGYPT AIR

Telephone numbers of EGYPT AIR offices in governorates:

Abu Simbel Sales Office:	34836-324735
Alexandria Office: Ram:	483357-482778
Gleze:	586561-586534
Airport Office:	4218464-4227898-428237-4281989
Aswan Office:	315000/12/3/4
Airport Office:	488307-488568
Assiut Office:	323151-322711-324000-329487
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Ismailia Office:	328937-321950-221951/2-328936
Luxor Office:	308580/12/3/4
Airport Office:	308567/8
Luxor Office Karnak:	382360
Marsa Matruh Office:	934398
Menoufia Office (Shehin El Kana):	233362-233523-233522
New Valley Office:	088/901695
Port Said Office:	224129-222878-228921
Port Said Office Karnak:	238333-239970
Sharm El Sheikh Office:	608314-608402
Airport Office:	608408
Taba Office:	068/53010-530011
Direct:	5783620
Tanta Office:	311750/311780
Zakazik Office:	349829-349830/1

### Travellers in Egypt

Egypt was never seriously considered by Florence Nightingale. Nor was marriage. She saw too many of her early Victorian contemporaries being led like lambs to the slaughter and turned into docile baby machines. She wanted to be a nurse, an idea which gave her mother the vapours and elicited stony opposition from her entire well-to-do family. Why, a nurse was nothing but a coarse, drunken trollop. But she had made up her mind. All through her twenties Florence stifled her feelings and tried to behave like a dutiful daughter. She was bored to stupefaction by the domestic busywork of home, but never gave up on her secret agenda or gave in to the idea of marriage, though she had several proposals.

"Send her on the grand tour of Europe", suggested her father. She went, and spent most of the time looking at workhouses and slums. "Have her presented at court!" suggested her mother. She was presented to the young Queen Victoria, just a year older than herself. But she wasn't interested and withdrew into her private dreams at home and became more neurotic than ever.

"Send her to Egypt!" they said in desperation in 1849, and to Egypt she came for five months in the company of a sympathetic older couple. And though inwardly she was still pondering the call from God which she felt she must somehow answer, outwardly the very strangeness and beauty of Egypt as seen from the SS *Parthenope*, the party's *dahabeya*, the monuments, the sunsets, the peaceful river, the gold on sands of Nubia were a potent tonic. She came laden with learned books on Egyptology which she studied conscientiously, but her keenest interest was reserved for the people, the state of their health and their living conditions. She described them in voluminous letters home which were collected by her sister and later published in 1854.

But she wasn't always serious. She had the usual fun, riding one of Cairo's 20,000 donkeys through streets "fragrant with oriental smells". "You address your ass in the tenderest terms, and in the purest Arabic; you adjure him by all the names of friendship to stop; but he understands no Arabic except his driver's and on he goes full trot, while you are making hairbreadth

## Egypt before Crimea

Egypt was never part of Florence Nightingale's plan, but it marked a turning point in her life, as Elizabeth Rodenbeck reveals

"scapes at every corner, yet receiving hardly a knock", Florence wrote cheerfully to her cousins.

"After threading these streets for miles, we came out upon the square where stands the magnificent mosque of Sultan Hassan, and above it the Citadel, up which we wound... till we came to the mosque built by Muhammad Ali and not yet finished, though in it lie his bones. It is of splendid size, but tawdriy ornamented, and looks better now with the scaffolding supporting those lofty domes, than ever it will do when decorated like Drury Lane. The obnoxious female [i.e. herself] is still admitted." She rode out to the pyramids and to the City of the Dead, inhabited by "houseless wanderers, ghouls and lepers".

The regime of the new Sultan Abbas, the grandson of the recently deceased Muhammad Ali, struck her as cruel. "Abbas Pasha is so furiously Mohammedan that he has just dismissed all Christians from his service, all that he could do without, besides 900 Coptic scribes who are fallen into the lowest poverty thereby." She was appalled by the wretchedness of the people: "Oh! If one could either forget, or believe, that the people here were one's fellow creatures, what a country this would be!"

The party hired a conventional *dahabeya* for 30 pounds a month, and Florence made a fine applied flag. On their trip up the Nile she took the opportunity to explore the villages along the banks and see how the people lived. "They call me 'the wild ass of the wilderness snuffing up the wind'", she wrote.

Egyptian impressions stayed long in her memory. Thirty years later, in 1879, she described "the glorious light of an Egyptian sunset... where all glows with colour, not like that of birds and flowers, but like transparent emeralds and sapphires and rubies and amethysts... the herds wandering their way home on the plain of Thebes by the colossal pair of sitting statues, followed by the stately woman in her one draped garment, plying her distaff, a naked,

lovely little brown child riding on her shoulder, and another on a buffalo."

In spite of the glory of the monuments, the scenery and the sunsets, Florence continued to react with shock and horror to the misery and squalor of the people. At Qena she deplored the



Florence Nightingale

degeneration of the monks "whose very religion has become an abomination." Christmas was spent at Luxor and Florence remarked that "the huts in the temple were each full of calves, turkeys, hens, goats, camels together with their men and women... one cannot conceive how even Moses could set about his work of regeneration here."

On 6 January 1850, the *Parthenope* reached Elephantine Island near Aswan: "a tumbled lair of a horde of savages". To Florence, Aswan was a godforsaken place, a "wilderness of woe". She saw Ethiopian slave girls sold by their parents for a handkerchief or a little box. On their return trip from Abu Simbel she noted that 200 workers at the sugar factory at Haw were paid the equivalent of a penny and three farthings a day. At Assiut the party took needles and pins as a gift to Mustafa the cook's wives, but Florence was shocked again: "Polygamy strikes at the root of everything in women... she is not a wife, she is not a mother."

By mid-March they were back in Giza and soon took the steamer to Alexandria. Before sailing for Europe, Florence spent some days with the missionaries of St Vincent de Paul. Their humanitarian efforts on behalf of down-trodden people inspired her with admiration and affection. Here was a way of life that she could understand. Was this what God had been telling her to do?

Though Florence's trip to Egypt was conventional and relatively uneventful, it nevertheless marked a turning point in her life. On the way home she spent a few days in Germany at one of the only training schools for nurses then in existence. She had never been so happy. And when she got home, opposition evaporated and she was finally allowed to train as a nurse.

Letter extracts from Florence Nightingale's *Letters from Egypt: A Journey on the Nile 1849-1850*, republished in 1987 by Weidenfeld & Nicolson.





Dreading the dreadlocks: Ghana slipped past Egypt to secure a 2-1 victory. Will the ACN be any different?

photo: Hassan Diab

## Africa gears up for ACN cup

The 20th African Cup of Nations soccer tournament is set to begin in Johannesburg's FNB Stadium. Eric Asomugha profiles the teams and the event

## Some succor for soccer

Saleh be nimble, Saleh be quick, Saleh could not avoid fans hurling bricks. Amira Ibrahim offers some insights into the status of Egypt's national soccer team as it departs for South Africa

In what will prove to be the biggest continental sports tournament since the 1995 All Africa Games in Zimbabwe, soccer teams from 16 African countries will converge on South Africa on 13 January for the 20th African Cup of Nations (ACN). Almost one year ago, 43 teams entered the ACN's preliminaries, and out of the pack, 14 rose to the top to secure a place in the championship. The race to the top, however, is far from over. For three weeks these 14 teams, along with South Africa which was guaranteed a place since it is hosting the competition, will be divided into four groups and will battle it out in a series of matches to see who emerges as the cup holder for this year.

Along with traditional competitors and favourites such as Egypt, Ghana, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire, it will also include several newcomers like South Africa, Liberia and Angola. Nigeria, a long-time competitor will not be participating for political reasons, and, at time of press, it was not clear whether Guinea will take its place.

What will add to the pace and intensity of the matches is the participation of various key African soccer players who play on the professional circuit in South America and Europe, like George Weah of AC Milan, Anthony Yeboah of Leeds United and Omar Biyick of Mexico's Club America. Other young upstarts hope to use the tournament as a means of catching the eye of professional scouts itching to discover another Pele, who, incidentally, will be in attendance.

### The 16 finalists for South Africa '96

#### Group A South Africa

As the host country, South Africa qualified automatically, no doubt a pleasing turn of events for the country which has never participated in this championship before. And, if national team coach Clive Barker has anything to do with it, South Africa could walk away with the cup and a big smile on the faces of the team members and President Nelson Mandela. This, however may be little more than a pipe dream as the young team has the ability but may not have the experience to defeat the rest.

**Key players:** Doctor Khumalo, Phil Masinga, John Moshu.

#### Egypt

Known as the Pharaohs, the Egyptian national team is the Group A favourite and champion in 1957, 1959 and 1986 ACN competitions. While many of the team's previous performances were less than promising, a strong finish in the All Africa Games, and a pep session with team coach Ruud Krol will help them begin the matches with a clean slate and a little pep.

**Key players:** Ahmed Kass, Magdi Tolba, Hadi Khashaba.

#### Cameroon

If internal squabbles over money are resolved amicably, the 1984 and 1988 champions will be able to

put up some strong competition, and at the least, make up for their poor performance in the 1994 World Cup. However, a great deal depends on their opening match with South Africa.

**Key players:** Omam Biyick, Alphonse Tchami.

#### Angola

Although new to the ACN, Angola should not be counted out until the fat lady has sung. As Group 6 winners in the qualifiers, Angola packs enough power to cause "small upsets" and squeeze past other teams while other Group A contenders kick the stuffing out of each other.

**Key players:** Fabrice Akwa, Paulo Alves.

#### Group B Zambia

Following a plane crash which killed most of the Zambian team's players in 1994, they went on to become runners-up in the ACN. And, while recent performances may be unstable, Zambia could still make it into the final four.

**Key players:** Kalusho Bwalya, Kenneth Molitoh.

#### Algeria

Along with Zambia, Algeria is a Group B favourite, a standing complemented by their 1990 ACN victory. For coach Ali Fergani and his team, it has been a tough year, spotted with terrorism, but they still made it through the Group 4 qualifiers behind Egypt.

**Key players:** Kaci Said, Abdel-Hafidh Tasfout.

#### Burkina Faso

This is the team's second shot at the cup, and no doubt, they hope to fare better than they did in their 1978 debut where they were knocked out in the first round. They have, in their favour, the fact that they were the surprise winners in the Group 7 qualifiers, where they defeated Côte d'Ivoire and Morocco.

**Key players:** Abou Quattara, Ousmane Sanou.

#### Sierra Leone

The burden of proof lies heavily on the shoulders of coach Roger Palmgren as he leads his team into its second ACN competition. Short of last place, any finish this year will probably be better than last year where they were not placed in the rankings. But to save some face and a few goals, they will have to contend with Zambia and Algeria, two top contenders. The key to their pseudo success may be this year's team made up of a mix of professionals and local players. This mixed team may be shaken, but not stirred.

**Key players:** Mohamed Kallon, Ibrahim Koromo.

#### Group C Nigeria

Tournament favourites and champions in 1980 and 1994, Nigeria's last minute decision to boycott the competition has elicited mixed reactions worldwide. Guinea may take its place.

#### Zaire

Champions in 1968 and 1974, and with Nigeria out of the way, Zaire's shot at winning the Group C

competition looks even better. As the winners of the Group 1 qualifications, Zaire is aiming for nothing less than being in the top two. But, best intentions often fall short of reality, and Zaire's German-Turkish coach, Sygi Wender and team captain Jean-Claude Kabeya will have to put their money where their mouths are to succeed. Otherwise, they may find that they are eating humble pie. A second round berth is assured.

**Key players:** Jean-Claude Kabeya, Bunene Nganduane.

#### Gabon

Another second-timer which, like Sierra Leone, did not place in the first appearance in the ACN, Gabon's coach, Alain de Costa Soares is counting on a strong defensive game to lead the team to victory. Second round berth is a difficult task. The team first participated in the competition in 1994.

**Key players:** Pierre Aubame, Guy Roger Nzamba.

#### Liberia

Newcomer Liberia finished second ahead of Senegal in Group 2 qualifications. Much attention is on George Weah, but coach Wilfred Lardner has balanced the team with more than 13 professionals in Europe. Pigeon-holed with Zaire, Liberia's chance at making it into the second round is slim but not in ruled out. **Key players:** George Weah, Christopher Wreh.

#### Group D Ghana

Second tournament favourites and champions in 1963, 1965, 1978 and 1982, Ghana parades a mixture of die-hard old stars and youths from the reigning World Youth Cup champions.

**Key players:** Abedi Pele, Anthony Yeboah.

#### Côte d'Ivoire

The 1992 champions, the Elephants are Ghana's arch-rivals. Their clashes have never been easy, and a repeat of the scenario where they crushed Ghana in 1994 will be the Elephants' primary task (excuse the pun). Like Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire's success will depend much on its placing in Group D.

**Key players:** Abdoulaye Traore, Aka Kouame.

#### Tunisia

The enormous task of rebuilding Tunisia's soccer programme after the 1994 Cup disaster has been coach Henri Kasperjak's main objective. How successful his efforts have been will be determined during this competition. Tunisia topped the lists in the Group 2 qualifiers.

**Key players:** Shukri El-Ouer, Mourad Chebbi.

#### Mozambique

Putting aside long years of civil war, Mozambique emerged as a surprise qualifier ahead of Guinea and Mali in the Group 6 qualifiers to win the chance of competing in the ACN for the second time. The team's first shot at the cup came in 1986. Despite its efforts, the prognosis is not good given the calibre of the other Group D teams.

**Key players:** Chiquinho Conde, George Fernandez.

Date	Group A Johannesburg	Group B Bloemfontein	Group C Durban	Group D P. Elizabeth
13.1.96	South Africa/ Cameroon			
14.1.96		Zambia / Algeria	To be announced Zaire	Côte d'Ivoire/ Ghana
15.1.96	Egypt/ Angola	Sierra Leone/ Burkina Faso		
16.1.96			Gabon/ Liberia	Tunisia/ Mozambique
17.1.96	REST	REST	REST	REST
18.1.96	Cameroon/ Egypt	Algeria/ Sierra Leone		
19.1.96			Zaire/ Gabon	Ghana/Tunisia
20.1.96	Angola/ South Africa	Burkina Faso/ Zambia		
21.1.96			Liberia/ to be announced	Mozambique/ Côte d'Ivoire
22/23. 1.96	REST	REST	REST	REST
24.1.96	Egypt/ South Africa	Sierra Leone/ Cameroon	Angola/ to be announced	Burkina Faso/ Algeria
25.1.96	Liberia/Zaire	Mozambique/ Ghana	Gabon/ to be announced	Tunisia/ Côte d'Ivoire
26.1.96	REST	REST	REST	REST
27.1.96	WINNER A/ SECOND S	WINNER B/ SECOND D		
28.1.96			WINNER C/ SECOND D	WINNER D/ SECOND C
29.1.96	REST	REST	REST	REST
31.1.96	Win. J'bourg/ Win. P. Elizabeth		Win. Bloem/ Win. Durban	
1/2.2.96	REST	REST	REST	REST
3.2.96	Semi-final			
3.2.96	FINAL			

## Hand to handball combat

Fate and a couple of bad plays forced the Egyptian handball team to accept second place in the International Handball Tournament. Inas Mazhar reports from Spain's Ciudad Real

Two hundred miles south of the Spanish capital, Madrid, lies Ciudad Real, a small city in the heart of hilly country. But, from 5-7 January, the only red to be seen was not the capes of the matadors, but in the eyes of the handball players from four different countries, all of whom were vying for first place in Spain's International Handball Tournament.

Egypt's world-ranked number six team arrived in the stadium full of confidence, which quickly turned in dismay following a loss to the Norwegian team in the first match. Playing the worst game they had played in quite a while, the Egyptians handed a 26-22 victory to Nor-

way on a silver platter.

"It would have been difficult to win any match playing the way we were," said Assem El-Saadani, Egypt's coach. "The Norwegians were not better than us, it is just that we played poorly. They benefited from our errors."

After a little R&R, the Egyptians came back the second day, recharged, full of confidence and swearing bloody vengeance. Taking on another Scandinavian team, Denmark, Egypt made up for the previous day's defeat by pulling ahead of the Danes, 31-29.

"We played a lot better in this match and deserved to win," explained El-Saadani.

With a record of 1-1, the final day of competition would determine just where Egypt stood. And, after a hard-fought match, Egypt stood right behind Spain in second place.

Although the Egyptian team took the lead in the first half, the Spanish team, perhaps recalling the old conquistador days, came back to even the score 13-13. Then, recalling that 13 is an unlucky number, they pulled ahead in lead 22-15 by the 20th minute of the second half. By this time, Egypt realised that it was behind and drove hard to score two additional goals.

But with 10 minutes to go until the end of the game, El-Saadani changed the strategy by press-

ing on the counter-attacks and defence. The gamble worked, and allowed the team to score 10 goals in eight minutes. It was, however, not enough to close the gap. With four goals of their own, the Spanish team took the gold with a 26-25 victory.

Trailing behind Egypt was Norway which came in third and Denmark in fourth. Spain's Raul Gonzales was named best player and Egypt's Ayman Salah, best goalie.

Following the tournament in Spain, the Egyptian team traveled to Sweden on Monday to compete in the 1996 World Cup. For five days, the world's eight best teams will go head-to-head for the gold.



Ayman Salah, selected best goalkeeper of the tournament



# Mohamed Khan: Human elements

His camera stands there, in the middle of the street, in the middle of the day, as the crowd ebbs and swirls. He watches people, and people watch right back

By the late 1970s and early '80s, the Egyptian film industry was undergoing a sharp turn which was to result, by the mid-'80s, in the emergence of a totally new genre, obscure to Egyptian audiences and critics alike: the misleadingly named *waghyya gadida* (neo-realism).

Characteristic of this genre was the choice of characters, events, settings, and even actors unfamiliar to the heavily star-oriented industry. The tone was melancholy, the rhythm deceptively measured; protagonists were depicted in real life situations, and audiences watched, bewildered, as they struggled through. Whatever the order of ranking, Mohamed Khan was undoubtedly instrumental in the birth and continuity of the genre.

Brought up in Egypt, Khan has been an earnest film viewer since his early teens. At the age of 18, he went to England, purportedly to fulfil his family's expectations, set on his engineering studies. His fascination with film was only to deepen, however; for a film buff, he had the best seats in the house.

During the early '60s, says Khan, "London was like a European cultural centre: fashion, music — the Beatles — art and film. There were films from all over the world; more than any other city in Europe."

During his A-level courses, Khan found out about the British Film School, where he soon began to attend an evening course in film technique. Mornings, he worked as a clerk in a trade indemnity company. Then cinematographer Said Shimi, Khan's childhood friend, wrote to him that the General Egyptian Company for Cinema, headed by prominent director Salah Abu Seif, was scouting out new talent. Hopeful, Khan came to Egypt and met Abu Seif, who asked him what he would like to do. Khan, embarrassed to tell the great Abu Seif that he also wanted to direct, answered: "Script writing". Asked to submit a sample of his writing, Khan had a script ready in three months. Called *Farah* ("Empire"), it was submitted to the Reading and Script Department. "The members of the committee evaluated my script, approved it and the company bought it. I was also asked to join the department," says Khan. But a year later he discovered he was "not really doing anything except reading some scripts from time to time. I reached a dead end, so I took the risk of resigning and went to Lebanon."

Again, Khan found himself in the front row: Lebanon was spearheading the Arab film industry during the mid-'60s, and Khan spent two years living what he remembers as "a young man's adventure". He looked for any job in film. He was second assistant director in three films and first assistant in another but "all four were mediocre." So it was back to England in 1966 for another six years, a journey which he describes as "the darkest period". Khan ended up in a biscuit factory, in a laundry, mink-clubbing: "I would take any job, even a manual one, the evening as long as I could attend the press film screenings during the day," he says. He began to doubt whether he would ever be able to return to film-making. After all, his only films so far were short projects, on 8mm and 16mm.

Three years later he started a publishing company. He wrote and published *An Introduction To Egyptian Cinema in 1969* — the only book on the subject in English to date — and edited *An Outline of Czechoslovak Cinema*.

The end of the dark period saw the birth of his first 35mm short film, *Watermelon*: nine-minutes in black-and-white shot during a holiday in Egypt. Back in England, he opened a jeans store, got married and had his first son. His encounter in 1977 with prominent editor Nadia Choukry, who eventually edited all his films, was to have a major impact. "She wondered what I was doing with all my interest in film

and encouraged me to return to Egypt and produce a movie," Khan says. And so he did. Fayed Ghali scripted *Darbat Shams* ("Shams's Blow"), and superstar Nour El-Sherif was approached to play the leading role. "He liked the script and offered to produce it, so I jumped at the idea because I lacked production experience," says Khan.

The film was a success at the box office. Because it was an action film, "I could easily have been pigeonholed. The entire industry thought of me as an action director. I became the black sheep of the industry because I kept refusing scripts. I still didn't know what type of film I preferred making, and it took me three films to discover that," he says. Misunderstood, he was accused of vanity — an accusation flung at him until today. "Any kind of independence generates this kind of accusation; but eventually they realised that I'd be bringing my own topics," Khan brought "package deals": he would choose the scriptwriter, actors, then look for a producer. "I was the one to decide," he states.

Khan has very rigid opinions of those involved in the film industry. "Real producers, if there are any, are very rare. Instead, we have financiers who only care about profit; the producer-director relationship in the artistic sense does not exist. We lack producers who think of the subject, visualise locations and suitable actors. Although money-based conflicts did occur, they couldn't boycott me since all my films were profitable," says Khan. Four of his feature films were produced by major actors; he produced or co-produced another four himself.

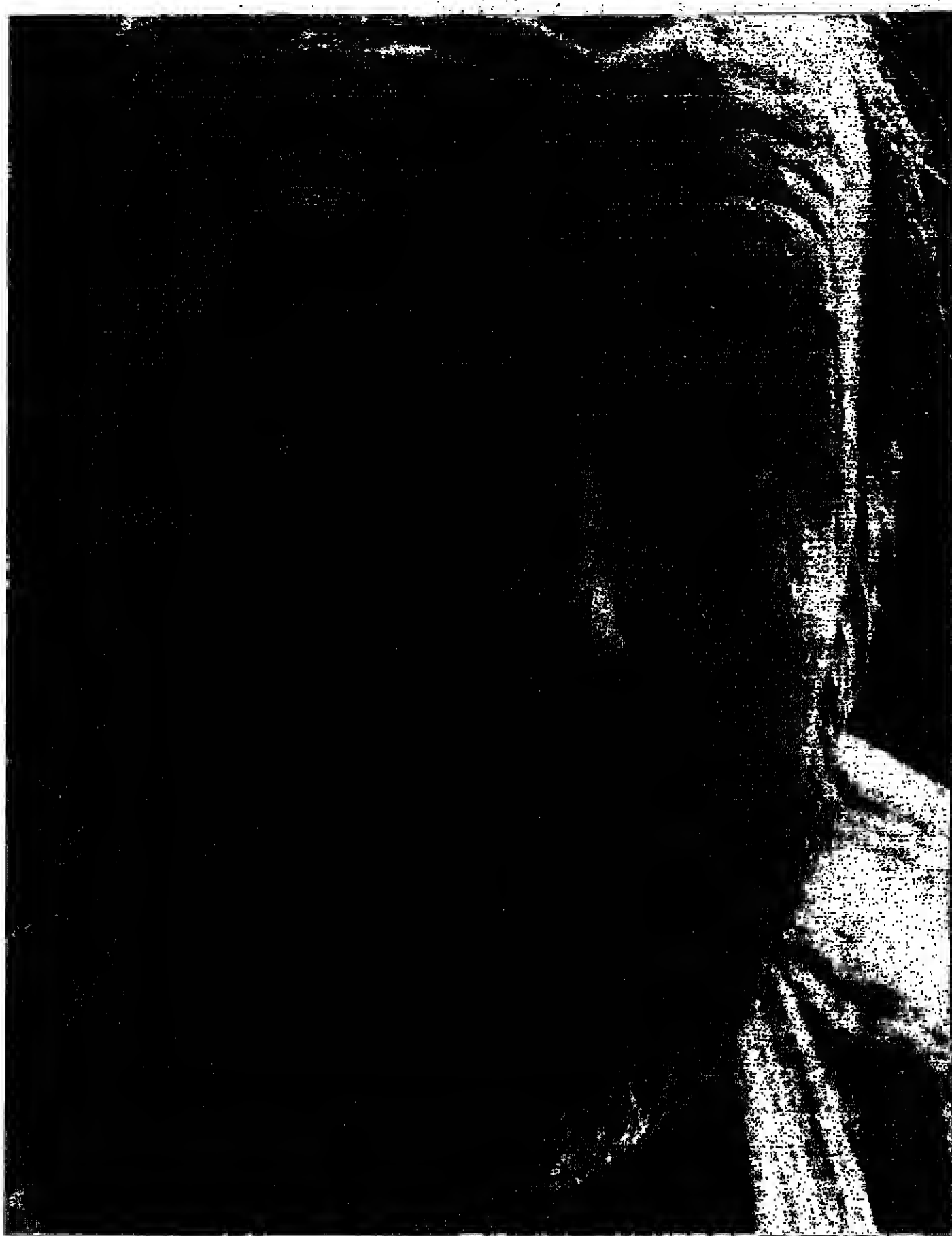
In the beginning Khan collaborated with Said Shimi, who had a similar background and similar dreams. Khan is matter-of-fact about the way the relationship evolved. "As we grew up we went our separate ways. I think of a photography director the same way I think of an actor. Although every photography director feels (and it is his right) that he can shoot any type of film, I don't feel the same. Team work in film is not necessarily a marriage; it's exactly like casting to me. The same applies to writers: one writer can script a particular film better than another writer. But the most mature writer I know is Assem Tawfiq. I love his writing. It's like a wise man writing," Khan says.

Khan's collaboration with Behir El-Dik "opened a lot of doors, made us discover the possibility of a different kind of cinema," he says. Most of the ideas were Khan's, but what particularly interested him was El-Dik's descriptive style. "His works seemed more like novels than scripts," he says.

Khan has managed to preserve his genre and refuse typically commercial films. To him it is a simple equation: "Suppose my audience is around five million and the total Arab film audience is 90 million. I'm satisfied. Otherwise I would have to make different movies altogether. I wouldn't like that."

It is his human approach towards people and situations, devoid of excessive melodrama or farce, and the subtly melancholic or humorous touches in the portrayal of his characters, that account for his films' outstanding quality. "I wish I could make a 'human' film, where the characters are seen-through, understood, within their cultural and human dilemmas. Bringing such characters on screen with my own film language is a dream I hope will come true. This is the exciting thing about film. In the end people will return to the simple form, the human element..." he says.

"My emphasis is never on the structure or development of the plot; it is always on the characters — an emphasis which is not very common here," he explains. This is why critics and audiences alike consistently wonder where the storyline is. Khan's



## Filmography

**Darbat Shams**  
(Shams' Blow) 1978  
**Al-Raghib**  
(Desire) 1979  
**Al-Thar**  
(Vengeance) 1980  
**Ta'ar Ala Al-Tariq**  
(Bird on the Road) 1981  
**Maw'ed Ala Al-Asha'**  
(Dinner Date) 1981  
**Noss Arneb**  
(Half a Million) 1982  
**Al-Hariff**  
(Street Player) 1983  
**Kharag Wa Lam Ya'ed**  
(Missing Person) 1984  
**Mashwar Omar**  
(Omar's Journey) 1986  
**'Awdat Mowaten**  
(Return of a Citizen) 1986  
**Youssef Wa Zelnab**  
(Youssef and Zelnab) 1986  
**Zawgat Ragel Moham**  
(Wife of an Important Man) 1987  
**Ahlan Hind Wa Kamilla**  
(Dreams of Hind and Camellia) 1988  
**Supermarket** 1989  
**Fares Al-Madina**  
(City Knight) 1990  
**Al-Gharqana**  
(The Drowned Woman) 1992  
**Mister Karate** 1993  
**Yom Har Geddah**  
(A Very Hot Day) 1994



answer: "I'm more interested in the character of the human being. I talk about people."

And indeed he does. The screen pulsates with life: people appear to be going about their daily routines — eating and drinking; using public transportation; dealing money, lending, borrowing, depositing, cashing, buying, selling, bribing. A familiarity builds up between people, between those watching and those on the screen. Their expressions and gestures allow the viewer to empathise with their hidden fears, anxieties, worries, deprivations and inner conflicts. The glamour that costumes and make-up give to stars in most films is replaced by emotions, attitudes, expressions and actions. Characteristic presence on screen is not the name of the game here. As a matter of fact, most climatic and conclusive scenes have relied on silent, composed, but highly expressive faces.

After working with Khan, most actors

claim to have discovered radically new approaches and dimensions to the characters they play. Superstar Adel Imam worked in a shoe factory in *Al-Hariff* (Street Player), Ahmed Zaki was a homeless car attendant in *Mister Karate*.

Which brings us to another gripe against Khan's films: they expose life in the gritty, real parts of Egypt. Well, sorry, Khan never shoots in built sets. His locations are streets, alleyways, squares, five-star hotels... "The location has to go with the characters. By shooting *Dreams of Hind and Camellia* in Heliopolis, which is not as poor as the characters (two maids) would have called for. I didn't go to the extreme at all. But I still received criticism. It's just over-sensitivity from their side," explains Khan. Veteran assistant cameraman Ismail El-Sos explains that Khan's camera stands smack in the centre of crowded streets — no apologies, no attempts at discreet dissimulation — unlike other di-

rectors of his genre who prefer to conceal it. "He is one director not afraid of exposing his camera in midday; in spite of that, hardly any of his shots are disturbed by the crowds," says El-Sos.

Khan's films often tackle women's position in society, their ambitions for improvement and the brick wall of reality they always come up against. His women are often romantic, sentimental and delicate, coupled with cruel, possessive and aggressive spouses who treat them as inferior physical possessions. The conflict erupts when the dream knight appears, seeking a union with the often married woman, a victim of tradition and prisoner of society (*Desire*, *Bird on the Road*, *Dinner Date*, *Wife of an Important Man*, *Dreams of Hind and Camellia*, *The Drowned Woman*).

Economic conditions also play a central role: money, in Khan's films, translates into pleasure and assistance to the needy.

but it is also a basic prerequisite for the stability of emotions. So the poor have petty jobs, or steal, the rich are burdened by debts in their twisted businesses, while the middle class is exploited by both rich and poor (*Return of a Citizen*, *Youssef and Zelnab*, *Dreams of Hind and Camellia*, *Supermarket*, *City Knight*, *A Very Hot Day*).

Khan is reticent on this point. "I don't like to read into my films, I just like to make them and give them a life of their own. I'm a completely non-political person. If I have any political elements they come from the surroundings of my characters."

Film makers of the younger generation think that watching a Khan picture is like reading poetry, while viewers say it is more like a window to real life. For Khan, he "would be satisfied just to be considered an interesting director."

Profile by Mohamed El-Assiouty

## Pack of Cards

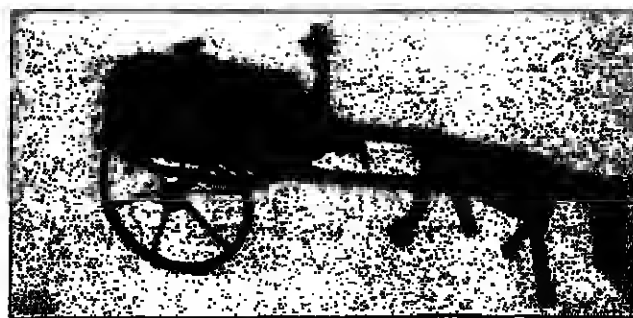
by Madame Sosostris

Just as I was beginning to get the feeling that the party season had come to a temporary end, lo and behold! an invitation to what's bound to be the best party of them all landed on my doorstep and sent my sinking heart soaring once more. Today, the whole Al-Ahram family is celebrating the birthday of chairman of the board, head of the press syndicate, Al-Ahram's editor-in-chief and father figure to us all Ibrahim Nafie. I always look forward to this day, dears, especially because Nafie always expresses his gratitude and love for us on this special occasion in his own way by turning the tables and giving out gifts to his loyal and loving friends.

So far this month, the music has been my life-force. Never, for all the world, dears, would I have missed a great jazz performance by Yehya Khalil and a brilliant piano recital by Moushra Elssa at the Opera House, and Ahmed Sidki's marvellous operetta, *A Night From One Thousand And One Nights* at Al-Gomhouriya theatre. Starting the year on a serene and harmonious note, on the fifth Moushra treated us to the works of Gamaal Abdel-Rahim, Tchaikowsky and Sibelius. A couple of days later, Yehya did his groovy stuff in an extra special concert of the great works of the legendary Duke Ellington and John Coltrane with American saxophonist Chet Passarella, Irish



Clockwise from top left: Ibrahim Nafie; Breitenbach, De Goede and Neube; flirtatious fashion by Attar; transport Rizaqallah style



bass player John McCullough, Ihab Radwan on guitar, Azar El-Bahravi on piano and Akram El-Sharkawi skillfully mastering the keyboard. So, with all that out of the way, I now have until the end of the month to attend Ahmed's operetta, starring actor Yehya El-Fakharsani, singers Angham and Ali El-Haggag, and directed by Selim Sehab,

as many more times as I want.

I always look for every opportunity to bring me closer to the region where I spent so many years, and which will always stay close to my heart. I may never have had a farm in Africa, dears, but I did have the pleasure of meeting two distinguished

guests from South Africa recently. Professor Willie Breitenbach and Doctor Patrick Neube were the dynamic guest speakers at a lecture organised by the South African Embassy, under the auspices of Ambassador Justus De Goede, with the aim of informing Egyptians of the developments and changes within South Africa. Enlightening and stimulating, dears.

The Weekly's very own Randa Shaath is at this very moment in Switzerland, roaming the hills in a flirty petticoat and warbling away. The

If you find yourself in Alexandria this month and feel like exposing yourself to a little more culture than usual, then go to the Spanish Cultural Centre and enjoy the sculptures of one of my favourite artists, Abdon Ramzi Rizaqallah. Toodle along now dears, because until the twenty-third, this exhibition is guaranteed to take you places you've never been.

Call me a fashion victim, a dedicated follower of fashion, dears, call me what you will, but there was absolutely no way I would have missed a fashion show at the Cairo Sheraton last week featuring the designs of the young and ambitious fashion designer Dalila Attar. The hotel's Tea Garden provided a pleasant back-drop to the stunning evening gowns, cocktail dresses and exquisitely designed *gallabiyas*. All of which, I have to tell you, were just so me that I had to hold myself back from crying out with glee.